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From the Editor

Dear all, out At last some good news the vaccine is here in North Shropshire and is being rolled using the RJAH hospital as the vaccination hub. I know a number of our members have had the call and all attest to how well organised the whole process is.

Please wait for a phone call from the surgery, for members with 'call minder' on their phones this can come from Whitchurch as well as Ellesmere, because Churchmere medical Group covers both towns.

Best wishes
Paul

A New Year Message from the Mayor of Ellesmere Cllr Paul Goulbourne:

The news of a third lockdown for England, will be an unwelcome announcement for many, but I think we all expected it. Now we all have our part to play in reducing the spread of the virus and protecting the NHS. I know that many of you are frightened of catching the virus and at the same time are craving contact with your friends.

As a community, we must continue to support our friends, families, and neighbours, especially looking out for people who live alone, as we have all done before. Although the infection rate in Shropshire is lower than the national average, it is rising every day so we to we should not be complacent, but it can give us some reassurance.

"I think it is very important to support our local businesses whenever we can, as they supported us during the first lockdown changing their modus operandi to help the vulnerable."

The Town Council has reactivated the community volunteers we set up before the first lockdown, we are lucky enough to still have a bank of registered volunteers to help in the community and unfortunately due to the speed the restrictions are coming into force will be unable to register anymore. The community volunteers will collect prescriptions and click and collect groceries or carry out.

If you know anyone in the Community that needs our help, please just give them our contact details: 01691 596290, 01691 622188, 01691 622689

But the most important thing is for you all to keep safe and look after each other.

Dear Probus friends,

Welcome to 2021 and all the good things that it might have on offer to help the recovery from this awful pandemic. It was very sad to hear in the last couple of weeks of the passing of our friends Laurie Mitchell and Roy Allen. Laurie had been in a Care Home in Stoke on Trent. Roy had been living at home but for, latterly, a short spell in Shrewsbury and Gobowen hospitals before moving to a Care Home in Nantwich. I sent a card and message to the families on behalf of us all at Probus Ellesmere. Both will be fondly remembered and their families are much in our thoughts. Paul has circulated the details of Roy's funeral at Welshampton on 26th January.

Our thoughts are also with those of you and your families who may be struggling with their own health issues.



Mind the rocks!

It is good to hear that the Covid-19 vaccination programme is progressing at some speed and a good number of our members have been 'first-jabbed'. Inevitably in this fast-moving world there may be some 'blips' but the logistics must be a huge challenge. The global use of social media by many has become a 'curate's egg' bringing huge advantages and opportunities for some to try to create chaos. It is interesting to see how control of 'anti-social messaging' is coming under scrutiny. Should governments be able to mandate vaccination in the interests of public health? I gather that in Australia 'No jab, no pay' policies already exist in child-care and aged-care amongst others.

Although governments cannot force vaccination on those who refuse it, they can punish them.

If you need any help to join Zoom Probus meetings whilst we are still unable to meet at the Comrades Club (fees due now!) please let us know, either to Paul our Secretary or to me. Our next Zoom speaker on January 21st at 10.30am is Richard Dunnill from the Samaritans which will doubtless be very enlightening.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our fine Club, please continue to let Fred Williams our Almoner know of anyone of our members who may be in need or difficulty and my very best wishes to you, your friends, family and neighbours for a safe and peaceful 2021.

Jeremy

Ellesmere Probus New Members pen-portrait 07/01/21

At our Zoom meeting on 07/01/21 we were given very interesting and informative talks by our two newest members, David Lomas and Celia Wilde. Below is a summary of David's presentation, Celia's will follow in due course. We are very grateful to them for their time and effort.

David Lomas

MACMILLAN CANCER ONLINE, FREE LIVING WELL AT HOME SESSIONS!

David gave us a fascinating talk on the UK chicken ('broiler') industry and the part he played in it during his career. 17million birds are killed and processed each week. They are often raised in well-insulated sheds housing 50,000 birds, each shed costing £750,000 and often four sheds on each site.

The industry started in USA in the mid-1920's with a 10,000 bird flock. Eric and Guy Reed brought the concept back to the UK and set up the company Nitrovit in North Yorkshire. The practice spread quickly. By the early 1950's chicken had become less of a luxury with the expansion of early fridges which could store chicken safely and for longer. Flock sizes increased and there was focus on disease control and vaccination.

In the 1950's the first integrated production systems were established in UK. Jack Eastwood from Nottingham, a house-builder by profession, set up breeding hatcheries, feed mills, growing-on sheds and a processing plant. The success of the model was expanded into Scotland, Teeside, South West England and Lincolnshire. He was the first to process 1 million birds per week, largely frozen. David did a lot of business with Eastwood. Eventually the business was sold to British American Tobacco who could not make it pay and closed down.

David's involvement in the industry took him to the World Poultry Conference in USA and he learned about the drug 'Tylan' made by Elanco which, when given to birds with respiratory disease (*Mycoplasma Gallisepticum*), resolved the issue within a day. Around 1962/1964 they knew that it was effective control but had no idea about the commercial implications. The Chronic Respiratory Disease was endemic affecting layers and broilers and invariably led to secondary infections usually coli septicaemia which if left untreated led to high mortality and rejection at the processing factory.

David was called to an old wooden mill in Dewsbury which housed 100,000 18 week old chickens sneezing with chronic respiratory disease. Administering the drug gave an immediate recovery. The disease is now eliminated in the UK.

Over time flock sizes increased, annual consumption of chickens increased by about 6% per year. The growth of supermarkets in the 1980's/90's meant that the consumer could now buy chicken on demand rather than rely on butchers etc sourcing them from wholesale markets. In 1992 chicken became the largest selling meat. Animal Rights activists appeared and there was a move towards organic production. All UK birds are air-chilled in processing rather than the US 'chlorinated' system. 'Chlorination' is a process that rapidly chills processed birds which results in water being 'sucked into' the carcass making the meat wetter and thus affects the cooked taste. In 1998 there was a lot of over-production but growth in sales kept the industry afloat.

David was heavily involved in the development of the processing industry for all of his career and was at the cutting edge of selling new machinery to make the factories more labour-efficient. He was professionally involved locally with J.P. Woods of Craven Arms, the business subsequently sold to Unilever and then closed.

When he retired from the industry David and his late wife Christine took a smallholding at Whixall. Jeremy thanked David for a fascinating insight into his life in the chicken industry. There followed a number of interesting questions from our members before the members giving a round of applause.

My not so early years of motoring: Part 4 *by Brian Rodgers*

When I reached Tanga I learned that it had had strong motor sport connections. Its civil airport was built on part of the remains of an RAF WWII airfield, and in the 50s the perimeter roads of the old RAF field were used for racing. Unfortunately, much of the circuit ran through a major coconut plantation and, because of the proximity of the track to the palms, the motor sport controlling body withdrew the circuit racing licence after a number of accidents. When I arrived there early in 1961, I joined the local club and was appointed to the committee, shortly after joining. After discussing various possibilities with the controlling body, we obtained permission to run ¼ mile sprints on one of the straights of the circuit, and those sprints became quite popular.

Wanting to enjoy some motor sport, I realised that I needed something more appropriate than my A90, and I p/ced it for a light blue Triumph TR3. I did enjoy that car but, as with my TC, it had something of a shady history and needed a lot of work doing to it, with an engine rebuild being the first priority. After that the car went well and I had a lot of fun with it both on road and track, where I had some success in minor events.

The local opposition was varied; Porsche 356s, Sunbeam Alpines, MGAs, Midgets, Sprites and Auto Union coupes. There were some very fast saloon cars including ex East African Safari Mercedes 219s and 220s, and Auto Union 1000s. The latter, although only 1000cc, were 3 cylinder 2-strokes and were very fast indeed. Additionally there were some motor bikes, among them the local traffic police with their AJS 500 twins. We really enjoyed ourselves there without there being any very serious motor sport, or that was, until the arrival of Go Karts. These were all 197 cc Villiers powered with 3-speed boxes and in no time about 20 club members had bought them. Initially, parts of the airfield were used for them but then the Police and municipal authorities permitted the main square in the middle of town to be used and that produced some very exciting racing. The events were so popular that competitors came from Kenya, as well as elsewhere in Tanganyika. A friend and I carried out some engine tuning on his Kart and possibly we raised the bhp from 6 to 8, a lot in those days.

My TR proved its worth in more ways than one, and I'm not sure that many people thought of TRs as tow cars! During one extremely wet rainy season, a friend and I set out on a Friday evening in his German Army type DKW Jeep, heading for Dar es Salaam and for a double date. The straight line distance was a little over 100 miles but by the main road it was 370 miles. There was a bush track short cut, 80 miles shorter, and we decided to use that. Murphy's Law, at about the half way mark, the river that normally flowed 6" deep was a raging torrent about 20 yds wide. We had no alternative but to turn back to the main road and carry on, but well behind schedule. At about 10pm our progress was not bad when, suddenly, a young bush buck jumped out on to the road in front. I swerved left but it went the same way and bang, we had a very dead buck and a very misshapen radiator. There was nothing for it but to push the car to the side of the road and spend the night in it. Shortly before sunrise I managed to hitch a lift in a truck heading back to Tanga.

On reaching town I called the DKW dealer to book the Jeep in for a radiator replacement and then I high-tailed the 120 miles back to the accident site in my TR. There I found that Peter had already skinned and gutted the buck and I thought to myself, "This venison better be good, because it's going to be very expensive." We hitched the Jeep to the TR and were away in no time. Those Jeeps were very light vehicles and I found that the TR would tow it comfortably in 3rd at 45 to 50 mph. A few miles from town an Austin Gypsy 4x4 drew out on to the road in front of us. I was not going to be held up by him and I overtook. Peter always remembered the astonishment on the Gypsy driver's face.

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By mid afternoon we had the new radiator fixed and we set off again but heavy rain had fallen and we did not reach our destination until 5.30 on the Sunday morning. Obviously we were too late for our dates and we could never work out why, after all our trouble, the girls wanted nothing more to do with us!

Unfortunately, I had two accidents in the TR. The first was when I was following another car late one night. The road was damp and we were really motoring. Suddenly the other driver braked very hard and turned right. To avoid a collision I went left but the TR developed a high speed spin and the well worn Michelin Xs had no grip at all on the damp tarmac. The spin went on for a long way and I ended up going off the road, almost head on into a brick wall. The car needed a lot of repairs but was back on the road in a few weeks.

Some months later I was travelling slowly on a single width road when a Morris Minor Traveller came from the opposite direction at a fair speed. I stopped but the Minor continued coming on, seemingly faster, and I could see the look of horror on the other driver's face. I think he probably stood hard on the throttle rather than the brake. He hit me with such force that the very substantial TR chassis was distorted. He came out of his car and did not say anything about the accident but just said, "These damned accounts". He was an accountant, which might have explained his attitude. That, sad to say, was the end of the TR because I could not afford the repairs and I sold it.

However, that was not the end of my active motor sport there. A friend who had a new Frogeye Sprite, wanted to enter motor sport and asked me for help. I prepared the car for him and in return he let me drive it in various events. I entered hill climbs and sprints and had some success. I won some trophies including a "Gold" wall plaque for winning the 1500cc class at a speed trial in Mombasa. I was really trying hard in the unlimited class but spun on my last run. I had hoped that I might take the Silver but I was pipped by 0.1 sec by an Aston Martin DB2/4 and so I had to settle for Bronze.

At about that time I learned that the MD of the local Rootes importer had a new Sunbeam Alpine which had been fitted with a competition Sunbeam Rapier engine, as had been used in the most recent Monte Carlo Rally. I knew that the MD had no personal interest in competition motoring but I felt that he would like the publicity from successful results. A diplomatic approach to him, and I had the use of a very fast car for local sprints. On my best outing with that car, I managed to win various classes and also took first. I still have five trophies from that day, although most are a bit battered and tarnished now, because they need cleaning.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BURNS NIGHT

If you're a whisky fan you'll have no doubt enjoyed a Burns Night Supper or two, held every 25 January in celebration of Scotland's national bard, but have you ever wondered where the evening's many quirks and traditions come from? Matt Evans has the answers.



It's clear from the poem *Scotch Drink* that *Robert Burns* was partial to a tot of the water of life. Small wonder the drink runs so freely during modern Burns Supper events; when it came to revelry, Rabbie's lack of temperance was truly legendary.

But even a seasoned whisky drinker might find Burns Night festivities difficult, and not due to the quantities of booze. Addressing the Haggis? Selkirk's Grace? Strangers to Burns' writing might balk at all the little customs, and those who have attended a traditional supper may be mystified as to their origins.

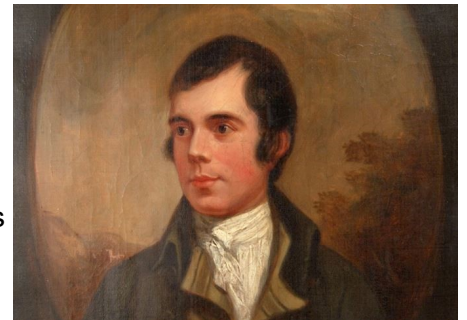
Fortunately, here's a handy history of Burns Night in time for 2018's festivities to make sure newbies

are going in prepped and ready, while dedicated Burns Supper attendees should come away with a few historical anecdotes. Slàinte!

THE FIRST BURNS NIGHT

After Robert Burns died of ill health in 1796, a group of nine friends and patrons got together to celebrate his life on his birthday in 1801. The event was held in Burns' family home, Burns Cottage in Alloway, and even two centuries ago the Supper's familiar checklist was already taking shape.

'The organiser, Rev'd Hamilton Paul, kept notes of the occasion and it is surprisingly similar to what we do today,' says Dr Clark McGinn, writer of *The Ultimate Burns Supper Book*, 'with a haggis being "addressed" and eaten, a toast to Burns' memory and a number of Burns' own poems and songs.' Aside from the group serving toasted sheep's head with the haggis, the celebration was already recognisable as Burns Night in its current form.



One year later, loosely organised Burns Clubs were already springing up in Paisley and Greenock. 'In the early 1800s there were clubs for everything,' McGinn tells us. 'Some were formal, with a written constitution, membership fees and a president's chain of office, while others could be as informal as the regulars in a pub. The first Burns Clubs fitted that mould.'

Posthumous celebration: The first Burns Night took place on Robert Burns' birthday, five years after his death

WHISKY'S PLACE AT THE TABLE

Today, that tradition continues. On Burns' birthday, 25 January, societies, clubs and groups of friends hold Burns Suppers across the world, to celebrate the life and times of Scotland's national poet. 'Over 1,000 Burns clubs and societies exist around the world,' says John McCheyne, brand ambassador for the *Scotch Malt Whisky Society*. 'No other poet is celebrated in this way.'

The tradition of honouring Burns didn't stay in Scotland for long. As Scots travelled the world as part of the British Empire, they brought their idiosyncrasies with them. Gradually the event became a celebration of the trappings of Scottish culture, namely a role in the ceremony for the bagpipes, kilted dress and of course, plenty of whisky.

'Robert Burns is probably the reason why whisky is Scotland's national drink,' McCheyne says. 'Like "Freedom and whisky gang thegither," some of his most famous sayings revolve around Scotch.'

From his ode to the distillation process in *John Barleycorn* to his rage against taxation in *The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer*, an amber vein runs through Burns' work, tracing a love of whisky throughout his life. Although Burns' predilection to excess is not quite an example to be followed, to pour a dram for the *traditional toasts* is part and parcel of the Burns experience.

A History of Haggis

The origins of haggis are as mysterious as the Loch Ness Monster.

In 2009, the world of haggis was rocked by controversy. While most of us might think of it as the quintessentially Scottish dish, Catherine Brown, a Glasgow-born food historian, claimed to have discovered a cookery book from 1615 'proving' that the 'great chieftain o the puddin' race' was actually an English invention. Her fellow Scots were outraged. There was no way a Sassenach could have come up with such braw fid, they growled. As one Edinburgh haggis-maker scowled: 'I didn't hear of Shakespeare writing a poem about haggis.'

So who is right? It's hard to say. Haggis' origins are shrouded in mystery. There is no telling where – or when – it came into being. Some believe that it was brought over by the Romans. Although evidence is scarce, their version – made from pork – probably began as a rudimentary means of preserving meat during hunts. Whenever an animal was killed, the offal had to be eaten straight away, or preserved. This wasn't an easy thing to do in the middle of a field or forest, so the offal was simply chopped up, packed in salt, stuffed into the animal's stomach or wrapped in caul fat and then boiled, sometimes in a rudimentary basin made from the hide. It wasn't pretty, but it lasted for a couple of weeks – and ensured that nothing went to waste.

Others think that a similar type of proto-haggis may have been imported from Scandinavia by the Vikings at some point between the eighth and 13th centuries. In support of this, the Victorian philologist, Walter Skeat, suggested that the root, *hag*, may have been derived from the Old Norse *haggw* or the Old Icelandic *hoggva* – both of which mean 'to chop'. As such, the name would have meant something like 'chopped up stuff' and referred to the method of preparing the offal before it was stuffed into the stomach or caul.

Others still claim it as a French innovation. As Walter Scott pointed out, *hag* is also surprisingly similar to the French verb *hacher*, which – like *haggw/hoggva* – means 'to chop' or 'to mince'. Given the historically strong relationship between France and Scotland (the so-called 'Auld Alliance'), it is possible that some sort of precursor – not dissimilar to the modern *crêpinette* – might have been brought over at some point after c.1295.

But none of these theories is particularly compelling. At root, they are all based on speculation. Given that sausage-like dishes are found throughout Europe from a fairly early date, it is just as likely that the earliest form of haggis (the 'ur-haggis') emerged somewhere in the British Isles. Where, however, is uncertain. If it was made with sheep byproducts, as it is today, then it could have been prepared almost anywhere – and at any time.

An English 'puddyng'

The earliest references to a dish recognisably similar to haggis come from England. It is first glimpsed – dimly – in *The Forme of Cury* (c.1390), a rudimentary cookery book written by 'the Chief Master Cooks of Richard II'. Though a far cry from modern haggis, the recipe for *raysols* called for grated meat to be cooked in a pig's caul; and was evidently thought enough of a delicacy to grace the royal table. Some 40 years later, the word 'haggis' (or 'Hagws') made its debut in a Middle English recipe. Again, this was a rather rich dish, featuring the womb of a sheep, rather than the stomach; but nevertheless made use of a similar technique to that of its modern descendent:

Take þe Roppis [guts] with þe talour [tallow], & parboyle hem; þam hakke hem small; grynd pepir, & Safroun, & brede, & zolkys of Eyroun, & Raw Kreme or swete Mylke: do al to-gederys, & do in þe grete wombe of þe Schepe, þat is, the mawe; & þan seþe hym an serue forth ynne.

'Hagas' also features in the *Promptorium parvulorum* (c.1440), a bilingual English-Latin dictionary attributed to Geoffrey the Grammarian, a Norfolk friar. No recipe is given, but it is defined, for the first time, as a 'puddyng' – and was almost certainly made of sheep, given their importance to the local economy. And given Geoffrey's background, there is no doubt that haggis was enjoyed by ordinary folk – as well as by kings.

We should, however, be careful of reading too much into these texts. That they all come from England does not necessarily mean that haggis was invented in England – or that it was unknown elsewhere in the British Isles.

For the next century or so, haggis remained a culturally non-specific food. As Catherine Brown has rightly pointed out, it is found in Gervase Markham's *The English Huswife* (1615), a decidedly idiosyncratic book of recipes and remedies, which went on to become something of a bestseller. It also features in Thomas Hobbes' translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, where it is used to translate γαστέρα, a paunch stuffed with minced meat.

Given that a further recipe is found in the *Liber cure cocorum*, produced in Lancashire at some point in the mid-15th century, there can be no doubt that it was eaten in the north of England; and since the 'border' with Scotland was then rather fluid, it is not inconceivable that it was also enjoyed north of the Tweed.

So much, however, is conjecture. Not until c.1513 is haggis attested in an identifiably Scottish text. It appears, albeit fleetingly, in a verse by William Dunbar, a poet associated with the court of James VI. But even then, there is no sense of it being claimed as a distinctively Scottish – or even English – dish. It was just something people ate.

Becoming Scottish

So how did haggis come to be seen as Scottish? And what does this tell us about the formation of Scottish identity? Curiously, the first people to identify haggis as Scottish were not the Scots, but the English. There were two reasons for this. The first was a shift in patterns of consumption. By the end of the 17th century, the English diet had begun to change. As the Agricultural Revolution swept the country, productivity increased dramatically, making a wider range of better quality produce available to more people. This drastically reduced the market for offal. Though it continued to be eaten, especially in poorer sections of society, it was no longer a food of first resort – and dishes like haggis began to go out of fashion. In Scotland, however, precisely the opposite process took place. The late 17th century had been a period of economic decline. Seven years of severe famine had been followed by a devastating crash, brought on by a madcap attempt to establish a Scottish colony on the Gulf of Darién in modern Panama. There had, admittedly, been a slight recovery after the Act of Union with England (1707). But the gains were unevenly felt. While many landlords saw their incomes grow as a result of enclosure and the introduction of modern farming techniques, many poorer tenants – whose rents were increasingly set by auction – found themselves priced out of their homes by the commercialisation of agriculture. Without land or livelihood, their living conditions declined markedly. This served to increase the popularity of haggis. Since its ingredients were all inexpensive, it was something that even the poorest could afford. So, while haggis had virtually disappeared from England by the mid-18th century, it was booming in Scotland.

The second – and most important – reason was political. Not long after the Act of Union, the United Kingdom was convulsed by the Jacobite Risings, a series of attempts made by the descendents of the deposed James II to regain the throne. Though these had all been crushed, they had left an unpleasant taste in the mouth. Among the English, there was profound resentment. While they were happy enough to welcome wellborn Scots into London society and held Scottish soldiers in high esteem, they regarded most Scots – especially Highlanders – with undisguised contempt. Vitriolic attacks were published in the press and cartoons depicting Scots as godless barbarians began to appear. Food was a common focus. Given that there was thought to be a close connection between victuals and character, the perceived poverty of Scottish fare was used to deride the manhood – and even the humanity – of Scottish people. Perhaps the best-known example of this was by Samuel Johnson. In his *Dictionary* (1755), Johnson defined oats as: 'A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.'

Haggis was a natural target. Now that it was a rare sight in England, English critics felt justified in characterising it as a specifically 'Scottish' dish – and in denigrating it as somehow 'uncivilised'. In Tobias Smollet's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), one character, travelling through Scotland, hastily reassures an English correspondent that 'I am not yet Scotchman enough to relish their singed sheep's-head and haggice'. And, in an earlier satire for the *Briton*, Smollett has 'Lord Gothamstowe' claim that 'the very prospect' of a 'Caledonian haggis' turned his stomach.

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The Scots were not the sort to take this lying down. Their pride having been wounded, as much by the defeat of the Jacobites as by such attacks, they made a conscious effort to define themselves as 'different' from the English and to claim haggis as their own, with pride. The most telling expression of this was Robert Burns' 'Address to a Haggis' (1786). Here, Burns implicitly acknowledged that there was a connection between food and character, but turned it to the Scots' advantage. Other nations might have their ragout, *olio*, or fricassees, he argued; but that sort of food only turned a man into a weakling,

As feckless as a wither'd rash,

His spindle shank [thin legs] a guid whip-lash,

His nieve [fist] a nit [nut]

Haggis, by contrast, was the sort of food real men were made of. Those who ate it made the earth resound with their tread and could cut heads off their enemies as easily as if they were the tops of thistles. If the English wanted to sneer at it, that was their business – but they'd better watch out!

An Invented Tradition

Haggis' burgeoning association with Scotland was consolidated in the 19th century – albeit through rapprochement rather than rivalry. Once again, it was the English who provided the spur. After so many years' animosity between the two nations, George IV decided to try to heal the wounds by making a grant visit to Scotland in 1822. His stay in Edinburgh was choreographed by Walter Scott, who was so anxious to make Scotland attractive that he effectively invented a new 'tradition' of Scottishness. At the banquet thrown in the king's honour, everyone was decked out in tartan (previously the preserve of the Highlands and Islands); and care was taken to select foods that reflected 'Scottish' identity – including haggis.

George IV's visit ignited a craze for all things Scottish. Tartan became the height of fashion; a memorial to William Wallace was erected in Stirling; Robert Burns was honoured with a national festival in Ayr; Burns suppers became major events; and haggis was eaten in ever-growing quantities. Scots living abroad played the biggest role. Perhaps out of nostalgia, they were determined to make haggis the culinary centrepiece of Scottish identity. In 1845, for example, a public dinner held in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales featured tables laden with 'orthodox Scottish feed'. Haggis was the star attraction. But Scotland itself was not far behind. By the late 19th century, haggis was widely recognised as the 'national' dish – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Haggis' origins will always be controversial. As long as there are Burns suppers, there will be people arguing over whether the 'great chieftain' is 'really' Scottish. And unless some dazzlingly new evidence comes to light, I don't expect the question will ever be settled. But in a way, I hope it never is. Haggis' journey from mysterious beginnings to Scottish classic is as nourishing as haggis itself. Debating its origins shows us that 'national' dishes are always a slightly artificial construction; and that food tastes better when prejudice is left aside.



GRAND BURNS' FESTIVAL.—BROWN ENTERTAINS HIS FRIEND WI' A HAGGIS!

'Grand Burns' Festival – Brown Entertains his Friend wi' a Haggis!', by John Leech, Punch, 5 February 1859

© John Leech/Punch/Getty Images.

The Series of Memories of Ellesmere Residents Extracts from book 5 of the “Memories” Booklets Published in early 2000 by the Ellesmere Society

Memory 26

St. Michael's Church / Evacuees Dedication etc

Remembered by Constance Foulkes & Fr D. Powers

During the dark days of World War II, Liverpool, with its strategically important docks and radar installations, was at the end of the vital Atlantic life line, where the U.S. and British merchant fleets struggled to bring vital supplies to our beleaguered islands. The city, with its vast dock-land area, was a prime target for the German Luftwaffe. In August 1939, just before the outbreak of war, many Liverpool parents were persuaded to allow their children to be evacuated.

The children from St. Michael's school in Liverpool were sent to Ellesmere and neighbouring villages. They were city children from mainly terraced houses, many of whom had never ventured out of their home locality. It was quite a culture shock for both the city children and their country hosts. The late Mr. A1f Strange, in his book "Following Me Dad", recalls one of the boys, who stayed with their family:

'One of the lads, - a well-behaved boy and a favourite with the village people, stayed on longer than most. In later life he went in for the Roman Catholic Church. He is a Priest in a special calling. He has been to see us twice in recent years - well I say 'recent' and our Valerie is now thirty two, I link his first visit with her, because he called quite unexpectedly, on her Christening Day. The second time was more conspicuous, he arrived in a mini-bus or maybe it was a proper bus, with a group of Roman Catholic Clergymen, Priests, Fathers, the lot. He wanted them to see Hardwick Pool, and 'his' War-time Village. Vera, my wife, coped, as she always does.

This little boy is now Fr. Desmond Power, the Parish Priest of S1. Pascal Bayton Parish in Liverpool. Here are Fr. Power's memories of his wartime home with the Strange family of Welsh Frankton.

Memory 27

The Wartime Memories of a Liverpool Evacuee

Remembered by Fr. Desmond Power

"Towards the end of August 1939, on my way home after a week's holiday at my sister's in Brighton, the talk in the train was full of the threat of war. Just a few days later I was at Tuebrook Station in Liverpool to take the train, with the rest of St. Michael's School to Ellesmere in Shropshire. I was a ten-year-old evacuee with a gas mask over one shoulder and a duffel bag over the other. In the bag were a packet of biscuits and the minimum of clothes. I had left behind at home, my widowed mother who had just seen her eldest son go off to the war. My brother Bernard, at the age of twelve had been sent with his school to North Wales, and another brother, Cyril, aged fourteen, was away at school in Market Drayton. My mother was left at home with my brother John and my sister Frances. John was working with the shipbuilders Harland and Wolfe on the docks, where he was soon to be seriously injured while fire watching. I often think of the silent tears my mother must have wept.

After arrival in the afternoon at Ellesmere, we were all trucked to Tetchill Village school where we were given instant and very welcome refreshments. In due course, it was my turn to pile into a car in the care of Bill Strange. As the night drew on, children were deposited at various farms and cottages. At one farm I could hear a squalling baby; so I begged Bill not to leave me there. To my relief, he assured me that I was staying with him. When, at about nine or ten at night, I arrived at Bill's house, I was welcomed warmly by his mother and father and his others Jack, Alf and Frank. After further refreshment, a wash, and a card written to my mother, I was off to bed on Saturday I woke up to a lovely day and below my window was a tree trained against the wall with the most beautiful greengage plums. Contrary to Alf Strange's recollections in his memoirs, I did not arrive with the Moorcroft's.

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Until their appearance a few days later, I had never even known them. Furthermore, as Horan's altar boy, it was up to me to keep them on the straight and narrow in matters of Catholic discipline, rather than the other way round I was outside the house on Sunday morning when we were told that war had been declared. We were then off to church to pray with more earnestness than ever for the safety of our dear ones. Soon happily got into the rhythm of village life. Shortly after our arrival, the local vicar invited the evacuees to the Summer Fair. A few days later, I saw him near his church; so I crossed the road to thank him for his kind invitation, and told him how much I had enjoyed myself. When Mr. Merriman, our acting headmaster heard of this, he congratulated me warmly on the good impression I had made.

As for our schooling, we would spend half the day in the village school and half in the village hall, with the local children reversing the pattern. Our second teacher is Miss Gibney, and her introduction of dancing classes did not go down too well with the boys, and a frequent excuse for avoiding the 'Two Step' was that we had forgotten our pumps.

When I hear the sad tales of other evacuees, I often count my blessings for being with Mr. and Mrs. Strange. They could not have been kinder, and I grew to love them very much. I was well fed and clothed and given me very chance to keep to my religion. On Sundays, we would walk to Mass in a different village from week to week, sometimes through deep snow. And though at times we would arrive home quite late, a matter of some inconvenience to Mrs. Strange, she would always put a hot meal before us, and then give us a packet of peppermints as a Sunday treat.

In the winter, I learnt to prime a hurricane lamp, and at times would go out with Mr. Strange to fix the fence where some sheep had broken out. Other nights we would fill the cart with manure, and then go and spread it on the fields. Other times I would pump the bellows in the smithy and watch in fascination as Mr. Strange worked the hot metal into beautiful shapes of all sorts including the horses' shoes. One of my jobs was to paint the hooves of the horses with creosote once they were shod. Whilst the big Shire horses were generally gentle and tranquil, the hunters were more temperamental. That went for their owners too. I remember being shocked at the language of a very well dressed and well-spoken county lady.

Other vivid memories are of weaning a calf and collecting eggs; of putting ferrets down rat holes with a little terrier called Bogie waiting excitedly to give the rats the nip of death as they came above ground. I remember the making of butter, snaring and skinning a rabbit, getting a chicken ready for cooking, cleaning out the cowshed, going by pony and trap to Ellesmere, and going by truck to Oswestry Market. Thoughts come to mind of seeing Mrs. Strange baking her wonderful bread and scones and feeding the postman, the milk collector, and whoever came by; of bathing in Hardwick Pool, on the canal, discovering the wild life of the woods.

All this was a world of magic to a boy from a terraced street. Sadly, it is a world of a bygone age, where time, love and innocence could linger long.

I remember one lovely spring day when the roadside banks were full of daffodils and primroses, and I felt young love stirring in my heart. I walked across the fields to a cottage where dwelt a girl with raven hair and a smile to bewitch the gods. I stood beneath her window and sang as plaintively as I could "Ye Banks and Braes O'Bonnie Doon". It got me nowhere. I trudged back home, love thwarted, and my heart no longer a' flutter.

The summer brought a wedding and harvest. The wedding was of Tom Strange, the eldest son of the family, and his long-time sweetheart Elsie Cook. I was very honoured to be invited, but I needed Father Horan's permission to attend. This was accorded only on the assurance that I would not join in the prayers. In any event I enjoyed it immensely, both the Marriage Service in St. Mary's Church in Ellesmere, and the Reception afterwards, where I was treated discreetly to a drop of ale among other things. I remember that the officiating curate entered heartily into the spirit of the day.

The hay harvest showed village life at its very best. Neighbours moved together from one small-holding to another, toiling from dawn to dusk and at the end of the day, the host and his wife would lay on a supper of cheese, and bread, and ham and butter. There were spring onions, and pickled onions and lettuce, the lot washed down by tea, or home-brewed ale. The dusk came down on halcyon days.

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Alas, mingled with these idyllic memories are the sombre ones of war. Every day, the early months of the war, the road between Ellesmere and Oswestry was full military vehicles going up and down, as young soldiers were learning to drive before they went off to France. In the village steeple, there were pictures of German planes. We were all taught to recognise them should they come our way. Bill Strange brought home the rifle he would have to take to war. Older men were training in the Local Defence Volunteers, later to be known as the Home Guard cryptic letters were coming from my soldier brother. One boy and his sister among us had the sad news that their brother was reported missing on the Front.

My most striking memory to do with war is of the packed village church at the time when the whole nation was on its knees, praying for the safe return of our men from Dunkirk. Just after that, in June 1940, I had to return home to further my schooling. I was soon to experience the first of the blitzes on Liverpool, but three months later, I was back to Shropshire this time to Market Drayton where I was to see out the war.

On visiting Ellesmere some five years ago, I was delighted to see that the beautiful convent Chapel of the Parish Church was called St. Michael's since that was the Irish in Liverpool which had its young evacuated to Ellesmere and the villages around, Furthermore, the priest with them was Fr. Michael Horan. On the afternoon of our visit, my sister Frances, my sister-in-law Nora and myself were treated to a wonderful tea in the convent. Who said that hospitality was dead?" here are other Liverpoolians with happy memories of their war years in North Shropshire. The Cullen boys stayed Mr. and Mrs. Smith at Mistletoe Cottage, Colemere. Their granddaughter, Mrs. Joan Connah remembers (just about) the fuss on the day when the boys were finally due to leave to go home to Liverpool. Obviously, they had enjoyed rural life with the Smiths, and demonstrated their reluctance to leave by running across the fields and climbing a very prickly damson tree.

At the end of the war, the 'Scousers' went back to a bombed out Liverpool, Ration books and food restrictions. Why 'Scousers'? Scouse, a meat and vegetable stew, as the mainstay of a Liverpoolian diet. More often than not, it was 'blind scouse' i.e. meatless!

In 1947, six sisters of the Order of Poor Clares, came to Oteley, which had housed British wounded soldiers in the 1940's. An American Army Hospital was built in the park in 1943/44. Indeed, many local residents still remember the sumptuous ☐nly, that the Americans gave for the local children, to celebrate V.E. Day in May 1945.

After the war, the park was used by the British Army for RE.ME. training, They closed down in 1955. In May 1948, the Whitchurch Herald reported -

"Because of the procrastination by the War Office in deciding about the use of Oteley Park, Ellesmere, as a regular camp, nuns who have taken the house in the park have to pass 2,000 soldiers to fetch milk and papers. This was alleged by Mr. Oliver Poole MP for Oswestry at Shrewsbury on Saturday. Ellesmere council, he said, would have been pleased to use the huts for temporary housing accommodation and certain areas of the park could have been used for ☐agricultural purposes In the meantime, a particularly secluded order of nuns has now taken the ☐house. They have to go to the gate to collect maybe the milk or a paper or some essential item of equipment and now, unfortunately, the camp is being used as a permanent camp for soldiers.

However,' the sisters and soldiers must have lived in peace and the sisters stayed for another five years.

In 1947, Ellesmere was formed into a Parish, dedicated to St. Michael, because of the wartime connection with St. Michael's Liverpool. A large room in Oteley became the 'Parish Church'. It would hold one hundred and seventy people, plenty of room for the eight Ellesmere Catholics, soon to be augmented by rural Catholics, to number nearly twenty. In 1960, the Mainwarings wished to return to their estate, so the sisters built a new Monastery on a triangular piece of land opposite the Oteley entrance. The chapel now provides a Church for the Parish and an additional Parish Hall was completed in 1995.

There, the sisters live their chosen contemplative vocation of prayer, meditation, silence and work to the exclusive love of God Alongside, the Parish of St. Michael's is a lively, loving and growing parish, now numbering one hundred and eighty five members. It is an established member of 'Churches Together' in Ellesmere.

In Alf Strange's book, he recalls that at his marriage to Vera in 1951, one of the five bridesmaids was Avery Lawton of Liverpool, who spent four years of her childhood at Vera's home, evacuated to Welshampton. This is another happy legacy of a terrible war. Perhaps the same can be said of St. Michael's in Ellesmere.

"It's an ill wind that blows no good".

Businesses information during Lockdown

Ellesmere's Shops & Businesses

Lockdown 3.0	OPENING HOURS	CONTACT	Update 07.01.21 NOTES
A Mere Cycle	Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri 9.30am - 3.00pm Saturday 9.30am - 4.00pm	01691 622222 07988 842038	3pm onwards - collection and delivery of bikes
Co-op	Mon - Sun 6.00am - 10.00pm	01691 622560	No deliveries
Ellesmere Newsagents	Mon - Sat 5.00am - 5.30pm Sunday 6.00am - 11.00am	01691 622498	Deliveries - ring for details
Ellesmere Pharmacy	Mon - Fri 9.00am - 6.00pm Sat 9.00am - 5.00pm. Sunday closed.	01691 623359	
Hawkins Butchers	Mon - Sat 8.30am - 3.30pm	01691 622329	Deliveries - ring for details
Mere Motors	From Sat 9 January Mon - Sat 6.30am - 8.00pm Sunday 7.30am - 8.00pm	01691 622343	
Moolah, local food and delicatessen	Mon - Sun 9.30am - 6.00pm	01691 623532	Order by 1pm for home delivery
Pets Pantry	Mon - Sat 9.00am - 5.00pm	01691 624492	Deliveries. Click & Collect
Premier	Mon - Sun 7.00am - 10.00pm		
Princes LHS	Mon - Fri 8.00am - 5.00pm Saturday 9.00am - 12 noon	01691 624336	Electrical, heating and renewables
Richards Autos Ellesmere Business Park	Mon - Fri 8.00am - 5.00pm Collection and drop off is offered free of charge for anyone classed as vulnerable or shielding and vehicles fully sanitised on return.	01691 622421	MOT - no extension given during this Lockdown. We can check your MOT status for you.
Rightway Bevans	Mon - Sat 9.00am - 5.30pm Sunday 10.00am - 4.00pm		
Rodney Stokes Sausages & Pork Pies	Ellesmere Market Every Tuesday 8.00am - 12 noon	01691 622404	Deliveries - ring for details
Tesco	Mon - Sat 7.00am - 11.00pm Sunday 10.00am - 4.00pm	0345 671 9355	Online deliveries
Vermeulens, delicatessen and bakery	From Mon 11 January: Mon - Fri 7.00am - 4.00pm	01691 622521	Deliveries - ring for details

Ellesmere's Takeaways

Lockdown 3.0	OPENING HOURS	CONTACT	NOTES	Update 07.01.21 COLLECTION/DELIVERIES
Asian Spices	Sun - Thurs 5.00pm - 10.00pm Fri & Sat 5.00pm - 10.30pm	01691 623689		Delivery available 6.00pm - 9.00pm.
Cherry Tree	Wed - Sun 9.00am - 2.00pm	01691 624400	Facebook page has menus etc	Delivery possible with hours notice.
Ellesmere Comrades, Sports & Social Club	Sunday Lunches 12 noon - 2.30pm	07871 733375		Collection or delivery.
Coral Chinese	Sun & Mon 5.00pm - 9.00pm Thurs 4.00pm - 9.00pm Fri & Sat 4.00pm - 10.00pm Sunday 5.00pm - 9.00pm	01691 622853	Due to Covid Lockdown closing times may vary, please phone	
Ellesmere Kebab & Pizza	Mon - Sun 3.00pm - 10.30pm	01691 624638		Delivery service available
Meze, Greek Restaurant	Thursday - Saturday 5.30pm - 8.30pm	01691 622660	https://www.facebook.com/MezeGreekRestaurant https://www.mezeellesmere.co.uk/	Delivery service coming soon. 40% off all takeaway meals. Menu on website.
More than a Sundae	Friday 2.00pm - 5.00pm Saturday 12 noon - 5.00pm	07711 986694	Facebook	
New Wan Loy, Chinese	Tues - Sun 5.00pm - 9.00pm	01691 623479		
Pete's Sandwich Bar	Mon - Sat 8.00am - 2.00pm	01691 623414	Facebook	Free delivery in Ellesmere for orders over £10.00 other areas considered for charge
Pete's Meals on Wheels	Service as usual.	01691 623414		Monday - Wednesday Friday
Shropshire Fish Bar	Mon - Sat 11.30am - 9.00pm Sunday 12 noon - 9.00pm	01691 624287		
Thai Gate	Tues - Sat 5.00pm - 10.00pm Sunday 5.00pm - 9.00pm	01691 239478	www.ThaiGate.co.uk	10% off for collection

Ellesmere's Shops "Appointment Only" and "Click and Collect"

Lockdown 3.0

Update 07.01.21

APPOINTMENT ONLY

Please ring businesses or DM Facebook.

Ortho-bionomy UK	07377 315865	Facebook
S R Drinnan, Opticians	01691 623300	Facebook
Shampoochies Dog Spa	07568 515093	Facebook
Susan Haskey Chiropodist	07974 091984	Facebook
CLICK AND COLLECT		More details:
Ismays, Ladies Clothing	01691 623931	All Collections on Fridays. Facebook: Ismays Ellesmere ismaysclothing@hotmail.com
JS Hair	07980 225672	DM Facebook/Instagram or text mobile. Can deliver.
Lily the Pink, Florist	01691 623628	DM Facebook. Afternoon delivery available.
Sweetmere Sweet Shop	07896 881242	Facebook/Instagram. Delivery available.
White Lion Antiques	01691 623835	lynnedavies@uwclub.net

Local information

Good news the Vaccine is here. **Please don't phone the surgery to book a vaccine.** You will be phoned from the surgery and be offered an appointment at the RJAH hospital, this could be from either Ellesmere or Whitchurch surgeries.

If you receive a letter from the NHS offering you an appointment at one of the large vaccination hubs in Birmingham or Manchester etc there is no need to accept it, if you don't take up the invitation you will still be on the local practice's list.



Take 1 minute each day and help fight the outbreak.

Get the Covid 19 Symptom Tracker App from the App store or Google

Urgent Care Centres

Urgent Care Centres (UCCs) at Princess Royal Hospital (PRH) in Telford and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (RSH) will temporarily relocate to the Minor Injury Units (MIUs) in Whitchurch and Bridgnorth to form two Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs).

PLEASE CONTINUE TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Key contact details: Ellesmere Covid-19 Community Support Group:
01691 596290 / 622689

www.ellesmerecovidsupportgroups.org.uk

Shropshire Council Helpline: 0345 678 9028

For people living in the Welshampton or Lyneal area - please contact the Parish Council on 01948 710672 or go on their website <https://www.welshamptonandlyneal-pc.gov.uk/> where you will find information about their local Community Support group



Pastoral Support from the Churches in Ellesmere

Rev'd Pat Hawkins St Mary's Church

Tel [01691622571](tel:01691622571) email revpat.hawkins@gmail.com.

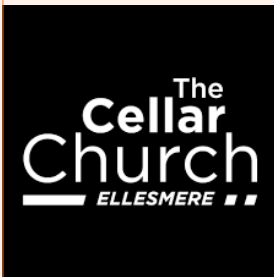
St Mary's Ellesmere:

Weekly services from 25th July:

Saturday 17:30 Said Holy Communion in the Nave
Sunday 08:00 Said Holy Communion in St Anne's
Sunday 10:15 Said Holy Communion in the Nave
Sunday 16:00 Said BCP Evening Prayer in Quire
Numbers are restricted.



Pastor Phil Wright 'The Cellar Church'.



[07711 986694](tel:07711986694) email: pastor.phil@me.com

The Cellar Church online every Sunday 10am and Wednesday 6pm

Follow the link Directly on our Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmxif6AT5w7IJH4Yxkbi6tQ>

On the cellar church website: <https://www.cellarchurch.co.uk/audio-video/>

Rev Julia Skitt Ellesmere Methodist Church

[01691 657349](tel:01691657349) email: rev.julia@mail.com

Ellesmere Methodist Church Services can be streamed from:

Wesley's Chapel in London - on Wednesdays 12.45, Thursdays 12.45 and
Sundays 9.45 and 11.00am

<https://www.wesleyschapel.org.uk/livestreaming/>

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster - Sundays at 11.00am

[https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWevents?](https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWevents?utm_source=Methodist+Church+House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11417259_Update)

[utm_source=Methodist+Church+House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11417259_Update](https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWevents?utm_source=Methodist+Church+House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11417259_Update)



Ellesmere Catholic Convent Chapel

The Chapel is open, the building on the left as you drive in. 8:30am - 6pm.

If you have anything that you'd like to ask the sister to pray for you: Phone [01691 622 283](tel:01691622283)

