

Gran's Rabbit Pies.

TV Dinners come wrapped, ready made, oven ready, from Marks or Asda, somewhere like that, they won't stay level on your knees. Gravy and bits of what you are having finish up on your tie, the settee, the carpets. Sometimes it's a mess. There you are though. Some are described as 'Creations' no less, the sainted Delia does them and the Naked Ape. Have I got that right? Does it matter? Can I be sued?

I saw one of the Gurus, Rick, the fish expert, on tele. He had gone walkabout for TV. He visited Mareham near Spalding for stuffed chine, which he said he liked. Also Leeds market for tripe, plain dressed, thick seam or weasand. He looked a bit old fashioned at the weasand but, fair do's, he tried a bit. Next was the weekly game auction at Louth, he liked that and bought some rabbits. To make a rabbit pie, he said. They were good meaty, local, rabbits, not your skinny

Chinese sort and give him his due, he put up a good potful of meat joints and added seasoning, stock and one or two more bits. He made a crust but he baked it separate, I don't know what my old gran would have said about that. There was now't to it, it was nice and brown, properly baked no doubt, but when we had gran's rabbit pie the crust was thick, flaky, succulent when it had soaked up some gravy and there was plenty of nice brown thickness especially where it was nipped down round the rim of the dish. Now get some of that on your plate ready for more gravy and what a dinner.

Like a lot more in Barton granddad kept a pig for killing into the house at back end, when it turned real cold and frosty I've written about this in 'Nostalgia' granddad had some chickens for eggs and the pot and both him and Uncle Stan kept some rabbits near the pigsty, Chinchillas, Silver Greys to show, Dutch and others, Belgian Hares was it? But all good for the pot and the Silver Greys made lovely gauntlet gloves for Auntie Flo. as well as making a very tasty pie. As to the gloves, please remember this was more than 80 years ago. One of gran's big rabbit pies had the legs, saddle, rib cage, head and the kidneys, all jointed, everything, all in. It had to have a little pot support in the middle to hold the crust up. Sometimes any pie that was left would be put in the pantry to go cold, it would set in a jelly. Oh, that tasty jelly round the meat and into the crust. What a dinner that made. TV Dinners, TV Cooks, folk nowadays "know now't". As to the rabbit legs in the pie. There was a tale that one large family in the town sat round for a rabbit pie and all the children clamoured for a leg, "give us a leg, Dad, give us a leg".

It was said that the sorely pressed parent said eventually words to the effect that it was a rabbit in the pie and 'not a blankety centipede'. Now then Barton. Of course I am talking 1920's-30's here but does anyone remember anything about the Rabbit Pie Suppers that some people and groups used to organise?

I can recall them but I don't know the who, why and when. Was it the football teams, the rabbit fanciers, the homing and racing pigeon club? Was it any group who fancied a get together, a bit of a 'do'? There is always a reason, a good excuse. Long years ago when I was in a position to say yea or nay if something was to be done in my DHQ I would sometimes have one of our budding DJ's put his head through the office door and say

“Isn’t it time we had a bit of wriggling about music”? That’s how long ago it was. A Pie and Peas supper went with it, I suppose the lads on the Sports Committee hadn’t heard of a Rabbit Pie Supper. Maybe I should have told them.

Mention of the racing pigeons does bring to mind the sight of men on their cycles racing up to the Post Office with their clocks to check their arrivals in as quickly as possible. I knew Alf Doughty for one, there were others, some pedalling hard from the brickyard houses to add that vital extra second or two. They were all keen, all knowledgeable. There are still a few pigeon fanciers who race their birds, they have lofts in the town, maybe they could tell us all about it! The Drill Hall was a venue for showing small stock come Barton Horse Show. And What about the Diddle-em Clubs? And on Sunday Evenings, the Salvation Army Band playing in Fleetgate near the Railway Station as well as in the Market Place. And bread and real beef dripping? Dripping that still had the little black flecks in it from the dripping tin and there was jelly in the bottom of the pot. Oh My. With toast!

Article supplied by Charles Watkinson