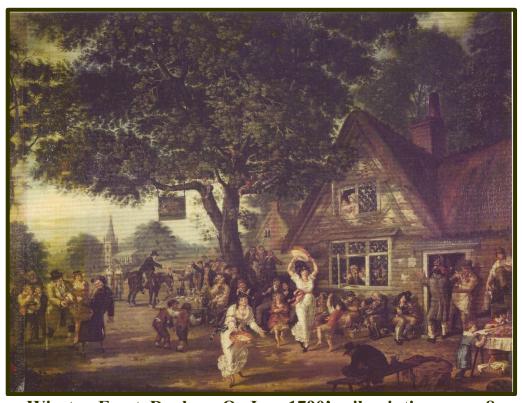






### WIGSTON HERITAGE

# GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE



Wigston Feast, Durham Ox Inn, 1790's oil painting, page 8

**BULLETIN 131** 

**March 2025** 

#### FROM THE CHAIRMAN



#### **HERITAGE CENTRE**

By the time you read this, we will have reopened our Heritage Centre in its new location - inside the Fenix Pharmacy on the corner of Canal Street and Blaby Road in South Wigston.

We do not have the amount of space that we had at the previous premises, and some of our assets have been put into storage for future use. However, we do have all of our local books, our amazing range of scrapbooks, and our very popular "Railway Corner", as well as computers with internet access and our ever-growing, fully indexed Photographic archive and other local data.

I should like to personally thank the volunteers who helped with the smooth transition, ensuring the continuance of this valuable asset for the local community.

Also by the time you read this, I will have stepped down as Chairman at the AGM in February but will continue as a committee member looking after the website and other activities.

#### **Peter Cousins**



**Our New Home** 

#### **Obituary**



John Hunting, a Society member for 7 years, passed away in December 2024 aged 89. John was very well known in the sporting world for his love of two sports, football and tennis. He became a football referee at the age of 32, officiating both in domestic matches and internationally as a FIFA referee. The pinnacle of his career was in 1984 when he refereed the FA Cup Final when Everton beat Watford 2-0, after which he retired from football and

moved into tennis, where he served for many years as an official of the Leicestershire Tennis County Association as treasurer and then secretary.

I knew John personally for many years as a customer in my business in Leicester, supplying him with computer accessories and servicing his computer.

The Society sends our condolences to the family.

#### **Peter Cousins**

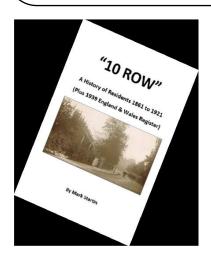
#### **Obituary**

We sadly announce the recent passing of one of our members, Mrs. Judith Hickling, a fairly new member of the Society. Our thoughts and sincere condolences go out to her family and friends.

Society's website: <a href="www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk">www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk</a>
All enquiries to: <a href="enquiries@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk">enquiries@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk</a>

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1<sup>st</sup> March, July and November. Articles etc., (which are always welcome) should be submitted to the Editor.

email: bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk <u>at least</u> four clear weeks <u>before</u> publication date.



#### 10 Row - A History of Residents 1861-1921

A unique and fascinating insight into a part of Wigston's history, revealing the lives of people who lived at

10 Row between 1861 and 1921 Researched and written by Mark Startin Price £10

Available from the Heritage Centre and monthly meetings

#### **CHRISTMAS PARTY 2024**

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024, around 70 members and guests attended our annual Christmas Party meeting. The committee and volunteers supplied an excellent range of party food and drinks, as well as a table quiz and prize raffle organised by Sue Lobb.

We were entertained by a talk on the history and types of magic by John Constantine, and after a refreshment break, he performed a range of magic tricks and illusions.

More pictures can be found on the website at:

www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Christmas-Party-2024.html









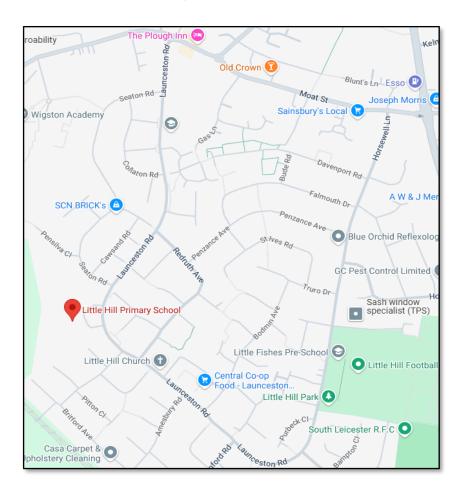
#### **Future Monthly Meetings**

#### AT THE NEW VENUE:

#### Little Hill Primary School, Launceston Road, Wigston LE18 2GZ

#### **Accessible from Launceston Road or Horsewell Lane**

Parking is available on site



#### **Evening Talks**

#### Tuesday 18th March

#### MEDIEVAL PILGRIMAGES FROM LEICESTERSHIRE - Peter Liddle

#### **Tuesday 15th April**

**HIGHFIELDS - LEICESTER'S 1st SUBURB – Richard Warren** A story of corporation corruption, bankruptcy and a local hero

#### **Tuesday 20th May**

**40 YEARS OF RAILWAY CLANGERS – Bill Devitt** (from the Orient Express to Richard Branson)

#### **Tuesday 17th June**

**EDWARD ELGAR: THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC - Sam Dobson** 

#### JULY NO MEETING

Most talks are illustrated with PowerPoint and pictures

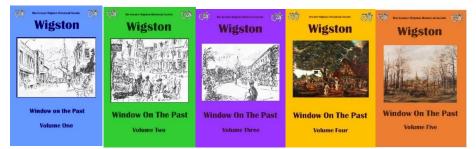
#### PLEASE NOTE TIMES FOR ALL MEETINGS: DOORS OPEN AT 6.45PM, MEETINGS START AT 7.15PM

Admission to meetings is free to members Non-Members £4 per person

Any enquiries please contact – <u>enquiries@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk</u>

**GWHS Books:** *Wigston – Window on the Past* Series

#### **Available Now**



Available online at <a href="https://gwhs.sumupstore.com/products">https://gwhs.sumupstore.com/products</a>

Or at the Heritage Centre and Monthly Meetings

#### DAYTIME TALKS

Due to the impending closure of the Centre, we have been able to secure new premises for the newly-named Thursday 'Daytime' talks:

## THE NEW VENUE FROM OCTOBER 2024 WILL BE: THE PAVILION, PEACE MEMORIAL PARK, LONG STREET, WIGSTON

#### **OCTOBER TO MARCH**

OPEN AT 2.30PM – TALKS START AT 3.00PM

#### APRIL TO SEPTEMBER

OPEN AT 9.30AM – TALK STARTS AT 10.00AM

#### THURSDAY MARCH 13TH 3.00PM

The History of The Red Cross by Sue Meeks
Sue worked for the Red Cross for 30 years

#### THURSDAY APRIL 10TH 10.00AM

Seldom Seen & Unknown Leicester by Judith Proctor

#### THURSDAY MAY 8TH 10.00AM

Wigston as used in her novels by Ros Kind

#### THURSDAY JUNE 12TH 10.00AM

Leicestershire's Wartime Airfields by Brian Johnson

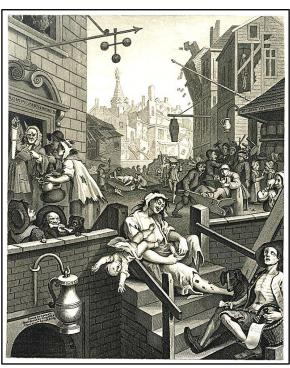
Talks, still at £4 per person, can be booked by email at:

bookings@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

#### **Old Inns of Wigston Magna**

This article is based on a series of histories on the oldest inns in Wigston published in earlier bulletins and compiled by Tricia Berry accompanied by Jim Colver's drawings.

During the Middle Ages there was only one, possibly two inns in Wigston; it must be remembered that until the 19th century the population of the village never surpassed 2,000, usually far less, so there were just not the customers for anymore. Other reasons for the dearth of public hostelries included the lack of variety in alcoholic beverages during the medieval period. Ale (cider in some places) and wine were the only available alcoholic drinks for inns to sell and wine was far too expensive for all but the very wealthy. The fact that most households brewed their own ale and a few produced a regular surplus which they would sell to their neighbours in what became known as alehouses added to the lack of demand for taverns. A great deal of ale was consumed, not because fresh water was unsafe, that is a myth, ale was, however, a substantial part of the daily diet, it was full of calories and vitamins and tasted a lot better than water; tea and coffee weren't readily available to the masses until the 19th century. Beer wouldn't become widely accessible until the 16th century and distilled spirits only appeared in England in small quantities mainly as medicinal elixirs and sold in apothecary's shops until the 17th century. Whisky (uisce beatha 'water of life') emerged in Scotland during the 15th century and vodka a century later after trade links were established with Russia, but initially only in a few ports. Brandy and gin only became available at the end of the 17th century, with mass produced gin so cheap it led to the infamous 'gin graze' of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



William Hogarth's 'Gin Lane'

#### **Alewife**

During the Middle Ages, alewives were central to the brewing process, particularly in England and northern Europe. Brewing ale was considered a domestic task, and women brewed small batches at home, sometimes selling any surplus to neighbours and passersby. A few women would make brewing a more regular business by displaying a broomstick or greenery outside their homes to advertise that ale was for sale. One reason, perhaps, why the broomstick became associated with witches. The role of the alewife was so significant that early brewing laws and regulations often specifically referenced women.



A woman and a hermit with ale, circa1300

Beer made from imported hops didn't become available until the 16th century in Wigston. Hops helped produce a more reliable and consistent drink that tended to last longer than traditional home fermented ale using barley (which had to consumed almost immediately), and the fact that the process was a little more complicated encouraged the growth of inns and taverns as the homebrew alehouses declined. The increasing consumption of beer encouraged the growth of commercial brewing with male-led guilds increasingly taking control. This transition, coupled with laws limiting women's independence, led to the decline of alewives as a profession. This also meant that men now mainly replaced women in the brewing industry. It seems that several buildings on Long Street near the entrance of today's Central Avenue, were used for brewing the village's beer at this time which was then circulated to the local hostelries. The number of inns in Wigston probably increased to three or four during the 16th century as the population grew steadily. It was during the second half of the 1500's that we first get the names of Wigston landlords, Henry White and his son Robert were listed as innkeepers but not the name of the establishment they were landlords of.

#### The Plough Inn



By Jim Colver

The Plough Inn, situated in Bushloe End is almost certainly the oldest inn in Wigston. Its name derives from the fact that during the Middle Ages heavy ploughs and other shared farm implements were communally stored near All Saints Church. It was certainly there in 1390, when Richard Baker was battered to death outside the inn by Adam Sutton using a wooden stave. One of eight murders recorded as occurring in Wigston between 1299 and 1390.

It wasn't until the 1846 Trades Directory that the Plough Inn actually enters the record which also lists its then landlord, Elizabeth Burbidge, who had been preceded by Henry Burbidge from 1828 to 1835 and then Richard Burbidge until 1841. Elizabeth was the widow of Richard Burbidge. It was held for the next 60 years by members of the Potter family and from 1912 to 1925 by Thomas Bull. Later landlords included John Walter Clarke during the Second World War followed by Frederick Stapleford and after it was demolished and rebuilt during the 1950s, Harry Herbert. For a period it was renamed the 'Sundowner'.



The Plough Inn circa 1900



The Plough Inn Today

#### The Bull's Head



We know that the Bull's Head was in existence in 1617 because it was mentioned in the notorious Boulter vs Noone libel case of 1637/38. This case was a result of a drunken brawl outside the inn, the Boulters were the landlords at the time. It is possible, however, that an inn may have been there far longer, it is even conceivable that it was actually the first in the village. Being sited on the main road between London and Leicester, it was ideally placed to cater for travellers along that route. Although there would have been relatively few travellers during the Middle Ages, it is still likely that there would have been at least one inn to meet their needs in the village. Whether this was the Bull's Head or another we'll never know. Most readers would probably assume that the inn took its name from the road it was situated on but, in fact, the opposite is true. When the inn was first built the road was called Spoutwell Street and only later became Bull Head Street after the name of the inn.

In June of 1964 there was a major fire that caused a greater deal of damage to the upper floor. The inn was pulled down in 1972 as part of the road widening scheme.



The Bull's Head Inn around 1910

#### The Old Crown Inn



The Old Crown Inn is, of course, closely associated with Wigston's infamous highwayman, George Davenport. His father William was the landlord for a time (though probably before George's birth) and there's the story of George regularly performing a jig on its roof which he called the "Astley's hornpipe." (probably named after a friend). It was also at the Old Crown Inn that George was turned over to the authorities by its landlord, Mr Barnes, in 1796. It was one of the earliest brick-built buildings in Wigston, other early examples included John Pochin's farmhouse (1691) in nearby Newgate Lane, and the 'Elms' built by Samuel Davenport, George's uncle, in 1752.

Coincidentally, the Old Crown Inn was again in the hands of the Davenports in 1846 when it gets its first official mention in that year's Trade Directory. George Davenport was named as the proprietor.



**Davenport and The Old Crown Inn** 



The Old Crown Inn Today

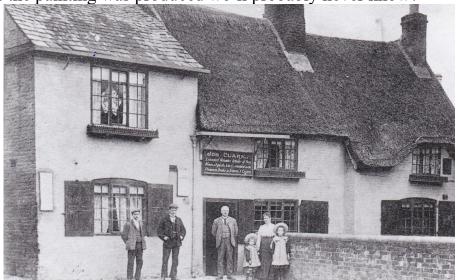
The pub was listed as either the Old Crown Inn, the Old Crown or the Crown Inn.

Directory	Date	Landlord
Post Office	1855	Hurst, John and shoemaker
Drakes	1861	Hurst, John
Whites	1862	Mary Hurst
Post Office	1864	Hurst, Mary (Mrs)
Barkers	1874	Hurst, Mary (Mrs)
Post Office	1876	Mary Hurst
Whites	1877	Hurst, Mary vict.
Kellys	1881	Goodwin, Thomas
Wrights	1882	Forryan Jno
Wrights	1888	Barron Wm.
Kellys	1888	Barrow, Wm.
Wrights	1895	Hill, Albert
Wrights	1899	Hackett, Ben
Kellys	1900	Hackett, Ben
Kellys	1904	Hackett, Ben
Kellys	1908	Hackett, Ben
Kellys	1916	Hackett, Ben
Kellys	1922	Hackett, William Ernest
Kellys	1925	Hackett, William Ernest
Kellys	1928	Hackett, Wm. Ernest
Kellys	1932	Hackett, William Ernest
Kellys	1936	Clark, Desmond K
Kellys	1941	Clark, Desmond K

#### **Durham Ox Inn**



Built around 1800, it was originally called 'The Woolpack' until 1817 when it was renamed the Durham Ox Inn. Of course, the 1790's oil painting of the Wigston Feast (shown on the front cover) shows another Durham Ox Inn in Church Nook near St Wistan's Church, which has since disappeared. Whether there was some kind of transfer of name when the second Durham Ox was built on Long Street shortly after the painting was produced we'll probably never know?



Original photo for Jim Colver's drawing dated 1905 with Landlord Job Clark

#### **Publicans:**

1825 - Edmund Fox - married Mary Humberstone in Wigston 1<sup>st</sup> June 1803. (Mary's mother was Ann Dand). Edmund came from Theddingworth. He committed suicide at the pub by hanging age 55 (22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1834 Leicester Chronicle<sup>1</sup> - see below ). His wife Mary became the Publican. Mary Fox had a break-in (14<sup>th</sup> Aug 1840 Leicester Journal<sup>2</sup> - see below)

1841 - Mary Fox, age 59 1845 - William Cooper 1846-61 - John Johnson 1863 - Isaac Hurst 1875-77 - Alfred Cleveland

SUICIBE.—About nine o'clock on Friday morning, the 14th inst. Mr. E. Fox, innkeeper, of Great Wigstou, was found suspended in his stable, where he had been hanging from six o'clock the preceding morning. He had been in a desponding way for some time previous, but having expressed his intention to go to Billesdon the morning upon which he committed the fatal act, no suspicion was entertained that he meditated putting a period to his life in the melancholy manner which he afterwards did.

Edmund Fox's suicide reported in the *Leicester Chronicle*, 22/11/1834

1881-88 - Thomas Boulter Jnr 1899 - Job Clark (see photo above) 1911 - William Edward Harold 1922-25 - Alfred Gill

Henry Hackett, 22, was charged with breaking into the dwelling-house of Mary Fox, at Great Wigston, and stealing therefrom four jars, two keys, and other articles. The prosecutrix deposed that she kept the Durham Ox

The prosecutrix deposed that she kept the Durham Ox public-house, in Great Wigston, and on going to bed on the night of the robbery, she left all her doors secured. On the following morning, she discovered that the brewhouse door was broken open, and one pound of butter, two or three pounds of mutton, and five pots of preserves, were stolen therefrom.

The prisoner, in his previous examination, pleaded that he had found the two keys while he was mushrooming, and that the other articles had been given him by his wife's sister.

Mr. Goldsmid defended the prisoner, and called several witnesses, who gave him a good character.—Guilty—Ten years transportation.

Break-in *Leicester Journal*, 14/8/1840

– Ten Years Transportation

#### The Blue Bell Inn and The Horse and Trumpet



18th Century Coach Travel

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century improved roads, especially the construction of new turnpikes, led to quicker and more comfortable journeys resulting in many more people travelling by coach. Wigston being on a major route from London to the north of the country brought more visitors to the village. Two new coaching inns were built as a result. The Horse and Trumpet on Bull Head Street (its name clearly denoting its origins) and the Blue Bell in Balle Dyke Street (later renamed Bell Street after the inn).



#### Horse and Trumpet built around 1800 and is still in business today

The Blue Bell moved onto the Leicester Road in 1860 after the original was demolished in 1847.



The Bell on Leicester Road

#### The 19th Century and Industrialisation

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wigston was transformed from a rural village into an urban industrial town. Its population increased from 1,658 in 1801 to over 8,000 by 1901. The arrival of the railways and the boot and shoe industry, which along with hosiery, was moving increasingly from domestic to largescale factory production. Retail outlets also increased rapidly in line with the growing population. More people provided more customers for public houses and their numbers grew substantially during the 1800s.



The Shoulder of Mutton Inn

The Shoulder of Mutton Inn, was situated on Long Street opposite today's post office. First listed in 1846 with John Cooper as landlord. It was demolished in 1895 and replaced by what would be commonly referred to as the 'Devil's House'.



King William IV

The King William IV was built in the 1840s on Bell Street and was kept by various members of the Goodwin family from 1846 until 1861 and for a 29-year period between 1889 and 1928 by the Hursts. It was demolished after the Second World War and the license transferred to the new Nautical William on Aylestone Lane in the 1950s when the surrounding estate was built. Also shown in this drawing is part of Garforth's fish and poultry shop which stood on the corner of Bell Street and Long Street. This had been removed some years earlier.



The Railway Hotel

# The Railway Hotel. With the coming of the railways, many hotels and public houses were built and named as such. Wigston Magna was no exception and this one on Station Road, built in 1852, it stood alongside the level crossing before 'Spion Kop' bridge was built and the road straightened, to some extent by-passing the hotel. Unlike many of the other 19<sup>th</sup> century pubs The Railway Hotel is still in business even if its name keeps changing.

#### Other 19th century Pubs



The Royal Oak, Leicester Road



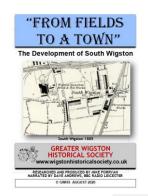
Old Royal Oak, 1897

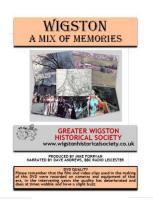


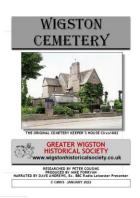
The Star and Garter, Leicester Road

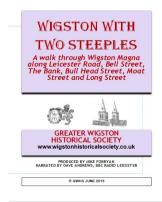
Steve Marquis

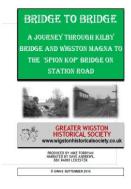
#### **GWHS DVDs AVAILABLE**











#### Priced at £10 each

Available to purchase from the GWHS on-line store - click here and follow the instructions on-screen:

https://gwhs.sumupstore.com/products

also available from The Heritage Centre on Fridays, and usually at the monthly meetings as well

#### From the Past



#### Wigston One Hundred and Two Hundred Years Ago

#### 1925



**4 March** – Calvin Coolidge is sworn in as 30<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, in the first inauguration to be broadcast on radio.

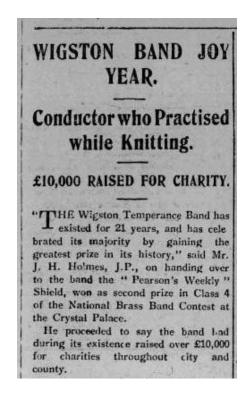
Regarded as the most corrupt President in US history, though that title is about to be passed on.



25 February – Art Gillham records for Columbia Records the first Western Electric masters commercially released popular music record. Records enabled popular music to become internationalised and began the largely Black American Jazz, Blues, Rock, Soul and Motown influence over British popular music.

#### Wigston in 1925 – Leicester Mercury





#### Haitian Slave Revolt, 1791-1804



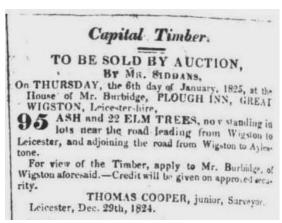
17 April 1825 – Charles X of France finally recognises an independent Haiti, 21 years after the French were expelled following the successful Haitian Revolution and demands the payment of 150 million gold francs in compensation, 30 million of which Haiti must finance through France itself, as down payment.

The Haitian Revolt of 1791-1804 was the most successful slave rebellion since Spartacus, in fact,

more successful – they won. France tried to regain its colony, but its army was sent packing by so-called inferior black slaves as was the British Army that invaded soon after in the hope of discouraging slaves in British colonies following their example. Few people in Britain know that over 100,000 British troops died in Haiti in the biggest defeat the British Army ever suffered.

Although Britain was able to brutally crush numerous slave revolts in its own colonies – including one in Jamacia in 1825 – the costs became so prohibitive that abolishing slavery was increasingly seen as the only option. Western Governments reacted to this humiliation by spending the next two centuries undermining and bankrupting the Haitian economy as a lesson and warning to any other indigenous peoples fighting for independence from their European masters.

#### Wigston 1825 – Leicester Chronicle



**1 January 1825** 

#### Weddings, 9 March 1825

On Tuesday, Mr. W. Hurst, farmer, Great Wigston, to Miss Phipps, of Beebr. On Sunday last, Mr. W. Rudd, of this place, to Fanny Evans, of Great Wigston, in this county. Same day, Mr. Thomas Masters, veterinary surgeon, of Great Wigston, to Naomi, only daughter of Mr. Hewerdine above mentioned.

#### **Medieval Meat Recipes**



The banquet of the peacock, scene from a manuscript of Les Voeux du paon, 1313

Meat was largely consumed by the rich during the Middle Ages. There was an enormous variety of methods for the preparation and presentation of meat dishes and this reflected the class structure of the day. For peasant families meat dishes would have been rare treats reserved only for feast days. It is telling in this regard that the common words for farm animals: cow, pig and chicken – which were reared yet rarely consumed by peasants – have old English origins but the terms for their meat: beef, pork and poultry are derivations of the French boeuf, porc and poulet, hardly surprising as it was only the French speaking elites¹ who would have enjoyed meat on a near daily basis. There were a few simple recipes cooked by peasants who had limited access to meat and little space in which to cook it.

It must also be remembered that most farm animals (apart from those kept for breeding in the following year) were culled in November due to problems of feeding them over winter. This meant that there would have been additional meat available for the Christmas Festivals but most would have been salted to make it last longer. The wealthy had expensive spices to flavour tainted meat, peasants would have relied on herbs.

<sup>1.</sup> French was the language of the ruling class following the Norman Conquest and was only gradually superseded by English during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The first literary works written in English were *Piers Ploughman* (circa1377) and *Canterbury Tales* (1380-1400).

#### **Popular Medieval Meat Recipes**

**Blawmanger** was a common meat recipe using rice and minced chicken. Ground almonds were sometimes added. The modern blancmange popular in the UK is a type of dessert, which only bears a slight similarity to its historic forerunner.



Roasting on a Spit

**Broiled Venison** was a dish reserved for the rich and a popular meat recipe at medieval banquets and feasts. Essentially, the meat was scored or parboiled and then larded before being spit roasted. A basting sauce of red wine and ground ginger, poured over the meat as it roasted on the spit added extra flavour and richness.

**Pork Roast** with spiced wine basting was a similar type of dish. The basting sauce's ingredients were red wine and spices such as garlic and ground coriander. Pork was often treated in the same way.

The subject of medieval meat recipes is vast because of the different types of meat and combinations of herbs, spices and wine that give them such character.

#### **Beef & Red Wine Stew**

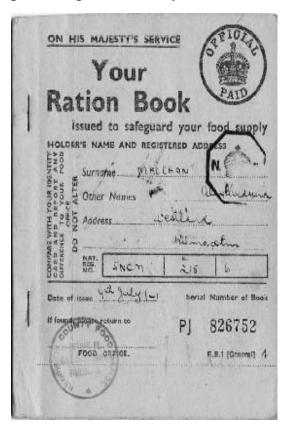
You can try a medieval-style recipe yourself with this one – it makes a great beef & red wine stew. This is a good example of what was probably once a poor 12th century Englishman's meal where the beef had to be tenderized to make it palatable using wine but over the centuries the recipe has been refined, become more popular and is now much more in the class of haute cuisine (like its French counterpart beef bourguignon). It is one of those dishes that is ideal for cold winter days when you want to serve something 'home-cooked' and appetizing for dinner. Something special to look forward to.

#### "Wiggy's War" is the sequel to "Wiggy's Child"

#### **Episode Eight**

#### **Food rationing**

Food rationing came in January, sugar and butter first, then later on meat and tea, and then everything else. We had to register at certain shops; we were registered at the little Co-op in Bull Head Street, near the old Quaker meeting House. If you were registered, then you became applicable for any tinned goods that came in on quota, providing, of course, you had the necessary 'points'.





**Ration stamps** 

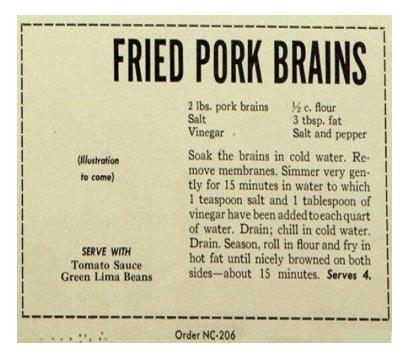
As the war progressed, the rationing system was refined to accommodate different needs. In order to ensure the fairest allocation of food possible, the Ministry of Food created classifications according to age and profession. Workers doing heavy labour were entitled to larger rations than other adult workers; children received smaller rations but relatively higher proportions of fats and proteins, and nursing or expectant mothers were entitled to larger allotments of milk and other animal-source foodstuffs. Supplementary rations were also given to the sick and people doing work that was considered to be detrimental to their health.

Although rationing meant a major change for the British people, generally speaking, the wartime food policies made sure that nobody fell short of basic nutritional requirements. The main exception to this was the German-occupied Channel Islands, which suffered a severe food crisis during final months of the war and occupation.



+ 16 points per month on the points system





(Mmm-mm, yummy!)