THE MELTON MOWBRAY
PORK–PIE INDUSTRY

by

J. E. BROWNLOW

Famed already as a metropolis of hunting and for Stilton cheese, Melton Mowbray gained perhaps greater celebrity during the latter half of the nineteenth century for its pork pies. Starting as a side-line in a small baker’s and confectioner’s shop, the trade grew at a phenomenal rate until by 1870 it was spoken of as the staple trade of the town. Meat pies, and no doubt pork pies, must have been made in many other towns in England, but Melton’s achieved an especial fame. This was certainly due in part to their undoubted good quality, but the story of the Melton pork-pie industry, for so it was, is more complicated than this. This article is simply an attempt to throw some light on the origins and development of this industry.

The Melton pork-pie trade originated about the year 1831 as a side-line in a little baker’s and confectioner’s shop in Leicester Street, next to the Fox Inn yard, owned by Edward Adcock. This shop has had a long history of pie-making since 1831. Edward Adcock was succeeded by his son, who is described in the Post Office Directory of 1848 as a Pork and Veal Pie Manufacturer, Confectioner, Grocer and Druggist. Fred Warner took over this business in 1872 and continued there until 1884, when he transferred it to the Market Place premises which still bear his name. John Pridmore succeeded to the Leicester Street shop and was making pies there until shortly before the first World War, after which it was first a sweet shop and now, very recently, a florist’s shop.

Adcock’s new venture in 1831 must have met with some measure of success, for by 1840 Enoch Evans had left his grocer’s shop in Queen Street and commenced making pork pies in the baker’s and confectioner’s shop which he had opened in the Beast Market, now Sherrard Street. Enoch Evans, more than anyone else, seems to have been the man responsible for getting the industry established on a large scale. By 1855 the Leicester Journal could report that “a season approaches, well nigh one and indivisible, for pork pies and for fox hunting, that justly celebrated Meltonian edible”. Pork pies, it continued, were now manufactured in considerable quantities, in a “house under ducal patronage” in the Beast Market, in another under the wing of the Corn Exchange, and at a third in Butcher’s Row, which had “lately been beautified by a plate-glass window and other embellishments”.

The shop under the wing of the Corn Exchange was that of Dickinson and Morris, which is still there and is now the oldest pork-pie bakery in the town. It had a long and continuous history as a bakehouse before John Dickinson moved there. An early surviving deed records that John Brown
Fig. 1. The Oldest Pork-Pie Shop.
sold the property to John Brocklesby, who sold it to Edward Basse in 1693 for £113 4s. 0d. The description of the site is interesting and refers to the property “in a certain place or street, commonly called Spittle End and near unto the Corn Cross”. The Corn Cross has long since disappeared from Corn Hill at the top of the High Street. The property continued in the hands of bakers until 1851. John Dickinson rented it and started to make pork pies there. A local tradition has it that his grandmother was the first person to make pork pies with the hand-raised crust which will be discussed later. Joseph Morris joined the firm in 1886 and the firm changed its name to Dickinson & Morris and bought the site in 1901. (Fig. 1). A further local tradition associates Joseph Morris with making the first pies specially made to be sent abroad to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The shop in Butcher’s Row, now Cheapside, belonged in 1855 to John Sturgess who had only just moved there from Leicester Street where he was described as “master baker and confectioner”. He remained there until about 1870 when the firm of Weston & Eckett bought it and sold it, in 1891, to Henry Wood. Pies were continuously made at this shop until 1933, when the premises were acquired by the International Stores.

The demand for pork pies grew further, a demand that could no longer be satisfied by the baker-confectioners with their small shops and inadequate ovens. The time soon came for factories to be built and especially equipped, to cater wholesale for the expanding market. In 1860 or just before, Enoch Evans built in Thorpe End the first pork-pie factory in the town, and sold his retail business in the Beast Market. Shortly after moving to Thorpe End he took his nephew, James John Hill, into partnership, and so came into being the firm of Evans & Hill. In 1909 the name of the firm was changed to Evans & Co. Henry Collin, a local cheese factor, quickly followed the example of Enoch Evans and opened another factory in Burton Street in the premises occupied since 1922 by Sutton Brothers, pork butchers and pie manufacturers. An entry in the Grantham Journal provides a useful clue to the date of the opening of Collin’s factory. It was reported on 15 October 1881 that the employees of Collin & Co. met in the “new pie room” to present a copy of the revised New Testament, a pair of candlesticks, and a water bottle and glass to Mr. and Mrs. Gill, who had been employed at Collin & Co. for over twenty years. So Henry Collin went into the pie business in about 1860.

The “pie room” was in the new buildings which the Grantham Journal had reported on 4 September 1880 were to be built on the site of the old premises, complete with warehouses, new offices and additional bakery. Trade was obviously booming. By 1880 the control of the firm of Collin & Co. was in the hands of Joseph Dickinson, who still combined pork-pie manufacturing with being a Stilton cheese merchant. He was probably a cousin of the Dicksons of Dickinson & Morris.

Henry Collin’s fame spread beyond Melton and the Midlands very soon after he had opened his factory. The Leicester Journal of 19 June 1863 records what seems to be the first large order for pies to be sent outside Melton. The landlord of the Commercial Hotel at Stranraer in Scotland had ordered a thousand pies for a Volunteer Review which was to take place there.
So far mention has been made of only two pie factories—Evans & Hill, and Collin & Co. A third, the firm of Tebbutt & Crosher, which was later to become world famous for Melton pies under the name of Tebbutt & Co., was older than either of those, but it was not at this time making pies. It was still a gentlemen’s outfitters, hosiers and mercers, occupying a shop in the Corn Hill. It was not until 1867 that Tebbutt & Crosher decided to change their occupation and requested their local Government Board to pass plans for a pie factory in Thorpe End, equipped with the most modern steam-driven machinery. Soon after the partners Tebbutt & Crosher had started their pie-making activities, they took into partnership William Thorpe Tuxford of the firm of Tuxford & Nephews, cheese factors, in Sherrard Street. The two firms were amalgamated and shared the same premises, but they kept their identity separate: the pie-making side traded under the name of Tebbutt & Co., whilst the cheese factors continued to be known as Tuxford and Nephews. Only in 1928 was the name Tuxford & Tebbutt Ltd. adopted to cover all their trading activities. This firm will celebrate its centenary in 1967, and during the whole of its history the Crosher family have been actively concerned with its management. John Thorpe Crosher is the present managing director.

William Thorpe Tuxford in 1867 was thus the second cheese factor to turn to the pie trade. It was not mere coincidence that made Melton Mowbray famed both for its Stilton cheese and for its pork pies. Pigs thrive upon whey which is the chief by-product of cheese making. A plentiful supply of good quality home-reared pork and ham must, indeed, be one of the prime reasons for the growth of the Melton pie industry. Since, too, this part of Leicestershire is predominantly good pasture land, there was also close at hand a plentiful supply of bull calves, useless as milk producers but suitable for veal, which accounts for the parallel growth of the making of veal-and-ham pies, for which there was a considerable demand, especially during the summer months, May to August, when many considered it unwise to eat pork.

It is not surprising that it was found profitable for some firms to continue cheese making and pie making. Evans & Hill also took up cheese making later after 1879. Tebbutt & Co. clearly reared their own pigs including a most ingenious sow which made news in the Grantham Journal in the autumn of 1878 after she had borne a litter of eleven piglets. In a loose box in her sty was kept a grinding mill for the corn on which the pigs were fed. “The old lady has learnt to grind the corn herself. She takes the handle in her mouth and moving her head from right to left manages to grind a large quantity of corn.”

During the 1860s and 70s the trade received a good deal of favourable publicity, both in the provincial and national press, and in a variety of other ways. One of the first issues of the Grantham Journal in 1857 carried an advertisement for pork pies “made in the aristocratic and sporting town of Melton Mowbray, and delivered daily”. The Leicester papers carried similar advertisements.

An itinerant American farmer, Elihu Burritt, spread the fame of Melton in print and in the New World, as a result of his first visit to Melton in 1863.
His description merits attention: “From Oakham I walked to Melton Mowbray, a cleanly, good looking town in Leicestershire, situated on the little River Eye. I spent a quiet Sabbath in Melton; attended divine service in the old parish church and listened to two extemporary sermons full of simple and earnest teaching and delivered in a conversational tone of voice. Melton Mowbray has also a very respectable individuality, it is a great centre for the scarlet-coated Nimrods who scale hedges and ditches in well-mounted squadrons after a fox, preserved at great expense and care, to become the victim of their valour. But this is a small and frivolous distinction compared with its celebrated manufacture of Pork Pies. It bids fair to become as famous for them as Banbury is for buns. I visited the principal establishment for providing the travelling and picnicking world with those very substantial and palatable portables. I went under the impulse of that uneasy suspicious curiosity to peer into the forbidden mysteries of the kitchen, which generally bring no satisfaction when gratified and which often astonishes a man not only to eat what is set before him without any question for conscience sake but also for the sake of the more delicate and exacting sensibilities of the stomach. I confess that my first visit to this, the greatest Pork-Pie factory in the world, savoured a little of the anxiety to know the worst instead of the best in regard to the solid materials and lighter ingredients which entered into the composition of this surprisingly cheap luxury. There were points also connected with the process of their elaboration which had given me an indefinable uneasiness in the refreshment rooms of a hundred railway stations. I was determined to settle these moot points once and for all. So I entered the establishment with an eye of as keen a speculation as an excise man searching for illicit distillery, and came out of it a more charitable and contented man. All was above board fair and clean, the meat was fresh and good, the flour was fine and sweet; the butter and lard would grace the neatest housewife’s larder, the forms on which the pies were moulded were as pure as spotless marble; the men and boys looked healthy and bright, their hands smooth and clean, their aprons white as snow. Not one smoked or took snuff at his work. I saw every process and implement employed in the construction of these Pork Pies for the market, the great tubs of pepper and spice, the huge ovens and cooling racks; the packing rooms, in a word every department and feature in this establishment. And the best thing I can say of it is this, that I shall eat with better satisfaction and relish hereafter the Pie bearing the brand of Evans of Melton Mowbray than I ever did before. The famous Stilton Cheese is another speciality of this quiet interesting town, or of its immediate neighbourhood, so putting the two articles of luxury and consumption together, it is rather ahead of Banbury with its cakes.”

It is not surprising to read that when he returned to Melton in 1867 he was entertained in a most handsome and liberal manner by Enoch Evans. He lectured in the Corn Exchange suitably on “The Benevolent Associations of the Day, their Spirit and Power”. He re-visited the town the following year and lectured in aid of the Church Restoration Fund. A grateful town added his monthly magazine, *The Bond of Brotherhood*, to the list of publications bought by the Literary Institute.
In 1877 there appeared an article on Melton in the Daily Telegraph in which the writer says, "Is not Melton Mowbray celebrated from the Indus to the Pole for its raised pies, and do not the firms of Collin & Co., Evans & Hill and Tebbutt & Co. despatch thousands of these delicacies every day to all parts of the world by the morning passenger trains. Having obtained permission from Mr. John Dickinson (proprietor of Collin & Co.) to visit his establishment, I had the opportunity of witnessing the career of a pie from the cradle to the grave, for I saw it after being most carefully and delicately made, placed in the oven and subsequently ate it. The distinguishing features in this manufacture are the marvellous cleanliness and purity of the articles used, everything possible being done by machinery so as to prevent the pies being touched by hand. Much business is done with Paris, and even with the Colonies whence they are despatched in air-tight containers." It was most unfortunate that after such praise the author should have missed his connection through being detained at Melton station whilst quantities of pork pies were being loaded on the train.

A third extract from the Grantham Journal at Christmas in 1879 describes well the scene in one of the pie factories. "To see the pie establishments at their best they ought to be visited at this festive season. For instance, take the large manufactories of Messrs. Evans & Hill, Messrs. Tebbutt & Co. at Thorpe End, Messrs. Collin & Co. at Burton End. As we enter them one wonders where all the legs of pork come from, what becomes of the mountains of rich paste which have been 'elevated' to the necessary 'standing' consistency by simple but effective machinery. We soon, however, get to know what becomes of the legs for with a dexterity of which only the initiated are capable, the flesh is rapidly stripped from the bone, cut to the required form, properly seasoned, then placed in the receptacle of 'raised' paste prepared for it. The coverings are deftly put on, the outer crust suitably ornamented. So far as the manufactured article is concerned, we have pies before us, ranging from one pound to twenty pounds weight. Being transferred to the capacious maw of the immense oven, where they are done to the nicest touch of brown, they are next removed to the cooling room, then neatly wrapped in papers, packed in hampers, placed in the 'float', run down to the station, from where they find their way to innumerable places lying between John O'Groats and Land's End. What has been said of the above establishments may also be said of Mr. John Dickinson. With the exception of Messrs. Evans & Hill the above firms, especially at Christmas time, send away immense quantities of Stilton cheese, for which Melton maintains a just celebrity."

In an industry concerned with the preparation and cooking of food, no mention is made in these extracts of any female labour being employed, but if no woman was to be seen in Evans & Hill's factory when Elihu Burritt visited it in 1863, they were certainly brought in there very shortly after. An undated photograph shows Enoch Evans and nineteen of his workpeople which include nine women. (Plate Ia). Enoch Evans died at the age of sixty-seven on 22 April 1869.
There is an inconsistency in the *Telegraph* article: the writer speaks of the raised pies and everything possible being done to prevent the pies being touched by hand. The great feature of the Melton pie was that the crust was "hand-raised" and baked without being enclosed in a tin, and it is this that demanded considerable skill from specially trained "raisers". The pastry was laid on the base of the block, which varied in size according to the weight of the pie to be made, the block was then turned upside down and the pastry worked down and round the block to form the casing into which the meat was placed. This was the "simple but effective machinery" mentioned in the *Grantham Journal*.

A fortuitous boost to the trade occurred, of all places, at the Drury Lane Theatre in London in 1876 during the Battle of Bosworth scene in a performance of *Richard III*. The *Grantham Journal* quoted from a report in the *Family Herald*: "A hungry spectator in the front row of the gallery felt inclined to enjoy his supper, and started to unwrap a Pork Pie which slipped from his grasp and dropped over the gallery and got lodged in the centre of the dress circle chandelier, which was lit by gas. As the Pork Pie began to frizzle, a most appetising odour filled the house. The contending armies of Richmond and Richard, diverted by the appetising smell, felt hunger, and their eyes were centred not on the opposing force but on the chandelier exhaling such delicious fragrance. A wag in the audience cried out, 'that is a real melting Mowbray pork pie'."

Valuable though this and other publicity might be, the trade owed its popularity in a large measure to the hunting fraternity. The *Daily News* pinpointed the connection between the two when, in October 1872, it had this to say: "a quaint old place is the quiet Leicestershire town with the gabled houses that seem to nestle for protection around the imposing abbatial church, which seems capable of containing all the inhabitants of Melton, horses as well as riders. But for its being the rendez-vous for so large and hard-riding a set of hunting men, Melton would probably have remained in the peaceful obscurity which surrounds the names of so many small country towns, for it has not, so far as I can ascertain, ever done anything else to attract celebrity, unless it be to make some especially succulent pork pies, and it might be fairly argued that even this trade is in a great measure provoked by the presence in its midst of hunting men, who find that this particular edible, when cut into slices, to be about the most convenient, not to say filling luncheon, which they can carry about with them." This writer was severely taken to task by Nimrod in the *Leicester Journal*; "a quaint old place is this quiet town! If the prance of horses and the dash of vehicles and tramp of pedestrians constitute wakefulness surely Melton was not asleep when seen by this would-be racy writer on the morning of Kirby Gate. Disporting upon Melton's succulent pork pies, the writer who has probably never had the felicity of a bite at a foxhunter's delicately cut sandwich, actually supposes that our aristocratic visitors carry lumps of pie with them on horseback, gravy and all, forgetting that such lumps would be certain to gravitate towards the top of the saddle and losing sight of the awful effects likely to be produced by such gravitation."
Whether or not the pie went into the saddle pouch, there can be little doubt that when the hunting men with their staffs of grooms and indoor servants had departed at the end of the season to their permanent residences, scattered all over the British Isles and some places in Europe, they took with them, if not a pie, a taste for them, which they insisted should be catered for in their home towns.

Then, too, the great concourse of people who converged on Melton for the races helped to popularise the local product, and this was especially true when, as in 1864, the Grand National Hunt Steeplechase was held the day after the local races. Melton never saw such a day as Saturday, 2 April 1864, and Leicestershire never saw such two days sport as that Friday and Saturday combined. The town was full to overflowing. The alert townspeople profited by the experience of what had taken place at Market Harborough the previous year, where the crowd had more than once cleared out everything edible. Great preparations were made in Melton to provide adequate food. “I’m afraid to say how many pork pies, the staple commodity of the town, were got ready”, wrote the Leicester Journal sporting correspondent.

All this had a very beneficial effect upon the trade. In July 1868 John Dickinson of Collin & Co. contracted to supply 5,000 pork-pies for the provision department at the Agricultural Show at Leicester. The recently-formed firm of Tebbutt & Co. had an order to supply a quantity of veal-and-ham pies.

Christmas time was an exceptionally busy time for the pork-pie manufacturers. Notwithstanding the general depression and lack of money throughout the country, the Leicester Journal just after the Christmas of 1879 stated that the demand for Melton’s pies had been greater than ever. The big firms had been working day and night and even then were scarcely able to satisfy the demands from all over the British Isles. The report also went on to say that this was in spite of all the limitations and dishonest attempts by various others in different parts of the country to use the name of Melton in an effort to sell their inferior pies. This was always a danger to Melton’s industry as will again be seen later. The Grantham Journal also provides confirmatory evidence for this and described fully the great burst of activity amongst Melton’s pie makers. One morning Tebbutt & Co. had orders in the post for two and a quarter tons of pies; Evans & Hill received an order from a London agent for more than a ton of pies. It is not possible to say how many pies these tonnages represent since the weight of each pie is not given, but two and a quarter tons would be equivalent to over five thousand 1lb. pies. The weight of a pork pie varied a good deal, though the most popular ones for consumption at home were from one to two pounds. Small ones of 4 oz. each were popular for quick cash sale, and from time to time enormous ones were ordered such as one in 1868 which John Dickinson of Collin & Co. sent away, which had taken seven hours to bake and weighed twenty-nine and a half pounds.

In 1880 the three chief local pie firms joined in a co-operative effort to advertise their goods. In the Grantham Journal they announced under the heading “Staple Trade” that “On and after Monday June 7th, our world
famed dainties will be offered for sale to passengers by every train stopping
at the Midland Station. All Pork Pie Manufacturers each in turn will send
down a week's supply." These pies were 4 oz. ones and sold at 2d. each.18

Pork pies meant big business for Melton not only at Christmas time but
for most of the year. When there were large exhibitions, festivals and cele-
brations, indeed for any large gathering of people, Melton pies were sure
to be on sale. To the Edinburgh Royal Review in 1881 Tebbutt & Co. sent
no less than two tons of pies, the other two firms each sent one and a half
tons.19 The Preston Guild the following year kept all three firms working
night and day for some time before the event to fulfil the orders. Tebbutt
& Co. sent 30,000 pies of various sizes weighing three and a quarter tons,
and other firms had large orders also.20 Judging from the number of pies
made and their weight, it is evident that they were nearly all, as one would
expect, small pies weighing about ¼lb.

In recording this event the Grantham Journal reported that “Leicester
and other places who assume the name of Melton, sent supplies”. By now the
Melton Mowbray pork pie was so famed that firms all over the Midlands
and even further afield were calling their home-made products “Melton
Mowbray Pork Pies”. The local manufacturers sought Counsel’s opinion,
but found they could do nothing to copyright the use of the name of the town.
In this connection it is not without interest to recall that in 1854 a suggestion
had been made that the name of Melton’s other famed product should be
changed. William Thorpe Tuxford, cheese factor and chairman of the
newly-formed Corn Exchange Company, said during the course of an address
he gave after laying the foundation stone of the Corn Exchange, “The finest
and most splendid cheese in the world is made within a circuit of ten miles
of this place—Melton being the centre. The cheese is called ‘Stilton’ but
from this time on I say call it ‘Meltonian Cream Cheese’.”21

For the Royal Agricultural Show at York in 1883 Tebbutt & Co. secured
the main contract for the supply of pies, and during the week about six tons
of pies were dispatched.22 On top of the normal weekly orders this must have
taxed their resources to the utmost, and their employees had to work night
and day to meet the demand. The large orders were sent by wire in the late
afternoon and by the following morning a ton of pies was ready to be
distributed over the showground. The railway company ran special engines.
Evans & Hill were also busy supplying the demands of their agents in the
city of York. The Jubilee Year of 1887 caused a similar boost.23 In ten days
the three firms turned out no less than 91,000 pies. And this rush was only
just over when the work was again at full pressure to supply the needs of the
visitors to the Manchester Exhibition, where in one day four tons of Tebbutt’s
pork pies were sold, and even then the customers, like Oliver Twist, clam­
oured for more.24 Christmas of the same year produced a great rush and signs
of a widening variety of Christmas fare being offered. Tebbutt & Co. in three
days turned out eight tons of pork and game pies and enormous quantities
of sausages. Mention is also made of brawn in neat glass moulds and potted
chicken, ham and tongue. Evans & Hill were also manufacturing large
(a) Enoch Evans and staff

(b) Evans and Hill: The pie room
PLATE II

Tebbutt and Co., under Royal Patronage
quantities of sausages, as the *Grantham Journal* put, “to mate the turkey and the chicken”. The same article also mentioned that the sale of Stilton cheese was now an important part of the trade of Evans & Hill, though their fame as pork-pie makers could really be said to be world wide when the same journal also reported that an order for a large consignment of pies had been received by Evans & Hill from Borneo, believed to be the furthest distance that Melton pies had so far been sent. This was in 1890.25

Three years later the *Leicester Journal* reported that the pork-pie trade, “Melton's staple industry”, was busier than ever at Christmas. Tons of pies and sausages, famed for their excellence throughout the world, were despatched to all parts from Tuxford & Tebbutt, Evans & Hill, and Collin & Co. and a new, but short-lived, firm was mentioned as rapidly coming to the front. The address of the new firm was Nottingham Road, and it occupied the premises which Mr. Dickinson, late of Collin & Co., had built to start pork-pie manufacturing on his own account. Two years later he succeeded to his father's business of coal merchant and retired from pie making.

The year 1893 was also memorable for the fact that one of the Melton firms was honoured by receiving “royal patronage”. (Plate II). An article in the *Grantham Journal* stated “Messrs. Tebbutt & Co. have purchased a quantity of 'Royal Pigs' and have been favoured with an order to supply a large quantity of pies to Her Majesty's household at Osborne, where the Queen is spending Christmas. It can therefore with truth be said that the Melton Mowbray Pie will be found in all homes from the Royal Palace to the cottage.”26 In 1895 and again the following year, the same firm was awarded the Gold Medal for Pies at the Cookery and Food Exhibition in London.

The industry was past its peak by the early years of the present century, because of keen and growing competition from other towns. In 1907 it was reported that “as Christmas approached tons of pies a day had been turned out, ranging from the humble twopenny to pies of 20 lb. each. For a time it has appeared that Melton’s noted industry was on the wane, but this year there appears to have been a return to the ‘good Old Times’. And so the trade continued with minor fluctuations until the outbreak of war in 1914, when the trade gained a new outlet and was busily engaged in supplying rations for the troops. Tebbutt & Co. turned out very few pies but made vast quantities of Maconochies tinned meat and vegetable stew and Christmas puddings. Evans & Hill were supplying the vast camp at Belton Park, Grantham, with pies and sausages, and—a new departure—cakes of all sorts and sizes. A few items taken from the firm’s costing book dated 1916,27 show the wide variety of the products supplied to Belton: Rice buns 4½d. per dozen; Rock cakes 5½d. per dozen; Mace buns 4¾d. per dozen; Nelson cakes 6d. per dozen; Eccles cakes 6d. per dozen; Currant cake 4d. per lb.; Plain cake 3¾d. per lb., etc. Collin & Co., too, were working at full pressure to fulfil orders, but mostly for sausages for the armed forces.

The export trade in Melton pork pies never recovered from the effects of the war and shortly after the war ended Evans & Co., as it had now become, (Plate Ib) purchased Collin’s factory in Burton Street and closed it down,
and it remained empty until Sutton Brothers acquired it in 1922 as pork butchers and pie makers for the retail shops. During the years between the wars Melton pies were still in demand. At the outbreak of war in 1939 the Ministry of Food took over all raw materials for food, and the Melton pie makers were allocated one third or less of the meat they used during 1938. Later the supply of pork was virtually stopped and most pigs were sent to bacon factories. When priority meals for manual workers, i.e. ironstone, agricultural workers and coal miners, were introduced, 90 per cent of Evans & Co’s. output consisted of meat, but no longer pork, pies for these meals. In 1953 Messrs. Evans & Co. closed down and in 1963 the factory was demolished in order to widen that part of Thorpe End.

The labour force employed in the industry in Melton was never very large. Towne's *Melton Compendium* of 1890 lists eighteen men as “pie makers”; these would be the skilled “raisers” only. These men were paid at a fixed rate per stone of flour used: in the years prior to the first World War a skilled man could earn from 18s. to 20s. per week, based on an output of about eighteen stones of flour at 1s. per stone. Joseph Meadwell who worked for Evans & Co. for over fifty years remembers these pre-1914 days. He recalls that in the summer time when trade was normally slacker, orders from caterers for County Cricket matches were very welcome, and when the Australian test teams were paying one of their visits it was no unusual thing to receive an order for 10,000 small pies for the first day and 5,000 for the following day if the first day had been fine. This meant working all night, for which, he said, they received overtime pay of 1½d. per hour. In hot weather veal-and-ham pies were in greater demand than pork pies. Then, too, when trade was slack in the factory the men were expected to go hay-making in Fred Hill's fields on the Saxby Road when the hay harvest was ready. The wholesale price of pies at this time was 6d. per pound and the retail price 8d. per pound.

By 1916 the wages had risen and the following extracts from the costing book of Evans & Co., which has been mentioned previously, show that the rate per stone of flour varied considerably, the highest paid workers receiving 1s. 8d. per stone and the lowest 1s. 4d.

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Total: 108s. 72 stones, an average of 1s. 6d. per stone

One stone of flour when added to the other ingredients produced 10 doz. small pies of about four ounces in weight. The following shows the costing of such a batch of pies:
The Melton Mowbray Pork-Pie Industry

1 stone — 10 dozen small pies.
14 lb. of flour at 2d. 2s. 4d.
6 1/2 lb. of meat at 1s. 6s. 6d.
4 lb. of lard at 9d. 3s. 0d.
Seasoning 3d.
Wrappers 3 1/2d.
Labour 1s. 6d.

Rough Costing
10 doz. pies at 1s. 4 1/2d. per doz. = 13s. 10 1/2d.

The Grantham Journal gives us occasional glimpses of the relations between management and employees. On 15 August 1864 it was reported that Evans & Hill gave their workpeople a half holiday, when about forty people, including wives and friends, had a picnic in one of Mr. Evans's fields about a mile from the town. The junior partner, John Hill, presided. Later on these outings became full-scale excursions to the seaside. A supper and an entertainment just after Christmas became an annual affair as well. Tebbutt & Co. also had an annual outing such as that in August 1876, when two brakes took their workpeople to Belvoir Castle accompanied by the Melton King Street handbell ringers. In 1881 a visit was paid to Hunstanton. The reward for turning out 10,000 pies weighing fourteen tons in the Jubilee Year, 1887, was a trip to Scarborough. In 1898 Tebbutt & Co. introduced a mutual sick benefit for their workpeople. If an employee fell sick his fellow workmen each contributed threepence per week whilst he was away, and this amount was augmented by one half by John Thorpe Crosher, the head of the firm. Thus if the amount collected was 10s., the firm made it up to 15s.

The picnic in Mr. Evans's field mentioned above is a nice reminder that in the days before the internal combustion engine, the field was the equivalent of the garage. The majority of the large shopkeepers and manufacturers owned or rented a field or fields as close as possible to the outskirts of the town. Deliveries were made by horse and cart, or else by horse-drawn vans and floats. The horse-and-trap was a mark of social importance. Mr. Hill of Evans & Hill had fields in the Saxby Road; Mr. Dickinson of Collin & Co. had fields on the Scaflord Road, where the annual treat for the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School took place. Sometimes fields were rented from the Melton Town Estate Lands on Dalby Road and Sandy Lane.

Melton's pork-pie manufacturers, both wholesalers and retailers, have played a considerable part in the public life of the town in the last hundred years, though none of them has built up vast fortunes. In religion they were mostly dissenters. Three generations of Croshers have been Town Wardens, and a Tuxford, a Tebbutt, a Dickinson, a Warner, and a Wood have also held office. These families have also supplied County Councillors, Urban Councillors, and Justices of the Peace. From the time that Enoch Evans left his shop in the Beast Market and opened his factory in Thorpe End, there has existed in the town the two distinct branches of the trade, the wholesale
and the retail. The three big wholesalers of this paper are now reduced to Tuxford & Tebbutt. Their pie factory still remains, but it does not do a great export trade in pork pies as it used to do. The baker-confectioners, with whom the trade started, seem to have come back into their own again, and Melton Mowbray pork pies still find their way through the services of the G.P.O. to all parts of the United Kingdom.

NOTES

1. Leicester Journal, 26 October 1855.

2. I am indebted to the present owner, Mr. George Liston Young, and to Messrs. Oldham & Marsh, solicitors, for allowing me to examine these deeds. Miss May Morris also gave me information about John Dickinson and her father, Joseph Morris.

3. Now Attenburrows, chemists.

4. Grantham Journal, 21 September 1867. When the new premises were ready the outfitting business was handed over to William Crosher, who created quite a stir in the town by exhibiting in his window a stocking, once the property of Daniel Lambert, and making a special offer of shirts at 4s. 6d. each, six for 26s.; silk hats 9s. 6d.; overcoats from 12s. 6d.

5. The two families of Crosher and Tuxford were related by marriage; a John Crosher married Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Thorpe Tuxford, in 1831.

6. Elihu Burritt, an American farmer, wrote two books: A Walk from London to John O' Groats, printed in 1864, and A Walk from London to Land's End and Back, printed in 1865. Both had a considerable sale in this country, although they were written principally for the benefit of the farming community of the U.S.A. They are mainly concerned with a description of the English and Scottish countryside and the small market towns.


9. ibid., 4 April 1868.

10. Quoted in an article in the Grantham Journal on 29 December 1877.


12. ibid., 11 November 1876.


15. Leicester Journal, 26 December 1879.


17. ibid., 27 December 1879.

18. ibid., 5 June 1880.

19. ibid., 27 August 1881.

20. ibid., 16 September 1882.

21. He also said in the same speech that “Collared brawn, a favourite dish with our forefathers, was the model taken for the shape of this splendid production”.


23. ibid., 4 June 1887.

24. ibid., 23 July 1887.

25. ibid., 15 March 1890.

26. ibid., 23 December 1893.

27. I am indebted to Miss Julia Morris for the loan of this important and valuable source book.