PPC 119 (2021) 7-22
https://doi.org/10.1558/ppc.28077
Petits Propos Culinaires (print) ISSN 0142-7857
Petits Propos Culinaires (online) ISSN 3029-0651

†BRIDGET ANN HENISCH

It is with much sadness that I report the death of Bridget Ann Henisch, an early Prospect Books author whose *Cakes and Characters: An English Christmas Tradition* appeared in 1984. It, like all her other books which more often concerned medieval English food and cookery, depended on an extensive and sensitive reading of a vast range of literature, many examples of which would have never occurred to the normal person to have had anything to do with food or the kitchen at all, but Bridget Henisch was able to tease the most telling examples and illustrations regardless. This skill and attention, together with a most graceful expression, have been on show in the series of short essays that she contributed to the pages of *PPC* in recent years. It was always an immense pleasure dealing with Mrs Henisch, always by post for we never met (and the same, I believe, was true for Alan Davidson). Epistolary formality was always preserved, no matter the warmth of content. I print below a short notice of her life which I retrieved from the website of the Koch Funeral Home in Pennsylvania.

'Bridget Ann Wilsher was born in 1932 in Wakefield, England, to Horace S. and Marjorie K. (Wareham) Wilsher. She earned a B.A. in Medieval English at Newnham College, Cambridge University, in 1953, and an M.A. at the University of London, Institute for Historical Research, 1956. She was a lecturer in medieval and 19th-century English literature at the University of Reading, Reading, England. There she met Heinz K. Henisch (1922–2006) a physicist and later, like her, a photohistorian. They married in 1960 and immigrated to the United States in 1963. Throughout their married years in State College, Pennsylvania, they hosted and kept in touch with many international scientists and scholars, organized frequent picnics in surrounding Pennsylvania state parks, and took a special interest in the local fauna, producing a book (illustrated with photographs by Heinz) called *Chipmunk Portrait*, about a much-loved creature they hadn't seen in England. Bridget was the author of a half dozen books on medieval literature and medieval cooking and food. She was a frequent contributor to *Petits Propos Culinaires* and was included in *The Oxford Companion to Food* (ed. Alan Davidson). She contributed dozens of essays to culinary-history publications. Before she died, she was writing a book on Victorian notions of childhood. When she and Heinz began to collect nineteenth-century photographs upon coming to the United States, she was able to call on her knowledge of Victorian literature and customs. Together they authored six scholarly books on aspects of photo-history and founded and edited an international journal, the first of its kind, *History of Photography*, published by Taylor and Francis in England. As Bridget Wilsher, she contributed dozens of articles to this publication. For over 40 years, the Henisches searched antique stores and dusty flea markets to assemble a collection of early photographs,

representing every nineteenth-century photographic process and providing rich opportunities for studying the social history of photography. In 1995, they donated the B. and H. Henisch Photo-History Collection to the Special Collections Library at the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Bridget was predeceased by her parents and her brother Peter. She is survived by family in England: niece Petronella Baynes; nephew Roger Wilsher; great-nephew Simon Baynes; great-niece Sarah Tucker; great-great nieces Phoebe, Ramona, and Ava; and great-great nephew Evan. She faithfully visited and corresponded actively with family and acquaintances far and near, including old college friends. Though she gave in to e-mail and computers in her last decades, she was thought to be single-handedly keeping the U.S. Postal Service afloat by carrying on regular, hand-written correspondence with more than a hundred acquaintances here and internationally. These biographical facts cannot capture the Bridget that we all knew and loved: sparkly fun to be with, inquisitive about whatever we were interested in, achingly knowledgeable about everything. She was someone who saw the best in everyone and was generous and loyal, including to the birds and furry creatures who assembled in her yard for meals each day. She was an indefatigable hostess to many dozens of friends and colleagues who will remember her Christmas Eve suppers, her Shrove Tuesday pancake gatherings, her hand-grown and personally delivered oat grass with Easter eggs, and her many carefully selected gifts of books tailored to friends at Christmas, on birthdays, and days in between. She had a wonderful sense of the absurd, was a voracious reader of newspapers, and seemed never to run out of energy. Though slight in stature, she was strong, independent, and determined to live life on her own terms, resisting well-meaning friends who sought to ease her final years with solutions that did not suit her. Those who knew her will be forever indebted to her for her friendship and kindness and for the profound influence she had on our lives. We are sad beyond words at our loss.'

†ANN RYCRAFT

The group surrounding the Leeds Symposium on Food History (now held at York) has suffered a double blow this year in losing both Laura Mason and Ann Rycraft, stalwart supporters, committee members and ever-cheerful constant presences when we made the journey from Devon and the south to mount bookstalls for loyal customers. Ann Rycraft was a herself a denizen of York and the nexus of food history and its pursuit in the city. I am grateful to Mark Dawson, the present chairman of the Symposium Committee, for this obituary notice:

'A student at the University of York, Ann became an archivist at the Borthwick Institute (the University of York archives) in the 1960s and was the

inventor of the Borthwick Wallets, study guides that are used by researchers to this day. She met her husband, Peter, at the University and they adopted two children. Ann went to work part time as a teacher in the Centre for Medieval Studies. She was responsible for a lot of early outreach work, teaching Latin and palaeography, opening up the medieval world that she found so fascinating and helping to make it accessible for others. As a teacher she aimed at very high standards but was also a real friend to her students many of whom stayed in touch for years. She founded the York Latin Project with a group of local residents who were taught to read medieval documents by Ann and went on to produce excellent published transcriptions, including *Before the Merchant Adventurers: The Accounts of the Fraternity of Jesus and Mary* (2007).

'Ann wrote numerous articles but, ever generous with her knowledge, many of her projects were jointly authored. Food history was one of many topics that Ann illuminated through her Latin and palaeography lessons. The 'Cooks and their Books' class she ran under the auspices of the WEA would ultimately lead to the formation of the York Food History Group and the publication of *A Ragoo of Ducks* (1997), a collection of recipes from manuscript collections the group had transcribed. Such experiences were fondly remembered by many of the group who went on to become regular attendees at the Leeds Symposium as a result.

'Ann contributed several papers to the Leeds Symposium from the 1990s onwards. After the Leeds Symposium moved to York, the York Food History Group with Ann at their core were essential to the practical running of the event. Ann convened some of the sessions, including one on pigs, which will be the basis for a forthcoming publication, and was a member of the organizing committee. In later years at the symposia Ann would sit quietly at the back of the hall, but always had a friendly greeting for the numerous people she had taught and met through the years. She is sadly missed by a great many.'

†LAURA MASON

The death at so young an age of the food historian and stalwart of the Leeds Symposium on Food History (and the Sophie Coe Prize, and the *Oxford Companion to Food*, and so much else) has affected many. She was, of course, a distinguished author on Prospect Books' list, *Sugar-Plums and Sherbet* and *Traditional Foods of Britain* her stand-out titles, together with several contributions to *PPC*. Many, and strong, are the memories of Laura that we have read in messages from friends around the country. She had a talent for friendship, a nicely dry wit, and a great ability to succeed at all she ventured. Should conditions allow, a celebration of her life is planned for 7 August 2020, in York, details to be announced. I am very grateful to Mark Dawson, once more, for his warm notice of Laura, with whom he co-operated on several

recent Leeds/York Symposia, in the planning, organizing and publication of their proceedings:

'Laura's passion for food was shaped by her upbringing on a dairy farm in the Yorkshire dales. Her mother, Kate, made butter and cheese with milk from their own cows and had a keen interest in the traditional and distinctive features of local farms, all of which seems to have fired the interest of her youngest daughter. The family also numbered butchers, graziers and at least one professional cook. Laura herself became a cook in the late 1970s but was soon drawn to academic study, completing a degree in Home Economics and pursuing postgraduate research before becoming a freelance food writer and historian in 1990. Visitors to National Trust gift shops will be familiar with some of Laura's books, which are a mainstay of their shelves and displays providing traditional recipes for pies, roasts and crumbles and testament to her prolific skill as a writer. Of particular note is *Farmhouse Cookery* (2005), a collection of recipes based around food produced by tenants on National Trust estates, recalling her own early experiences.

'Laura was able to write authoritatively for a popular audience because she knew her stuff and had done her research. She was an expert on the history of confectionery, writing *Sugar Plums and Sherbet: The Prehistory of Sweets* (1998) and more recently *Sweets and Candy: A Global History* (2018), as well as several articles on the early-nineteenth century London confectioner, William Jarrin. She contributed over 150 entries, mainly on confectionery, to the *Oxford Companion to Food* (1999) by Alan Davidson and was a contributor as well as a member of the editorial board of the *Oxford Companion to Sugar and Sweets* (2015). Industry took note of her knowledge and she was a part-time taster on the Nestlé Taste Panel, evaluating confectionery for Nestle-Rowntree of York and even providing input for the setup of Honeyduke's Sweetshop in the 2004 film *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

'Laura's contribution to the *Oxford Companion to Food* came at a time when she was engaged on her own epic encyclopaedic project: *Traditional Foods of Britain* (1999). This was a Europe-wide project funded by the European Union in the guise of Euroterroirs with the aim that each country should produce an inventory of its own traditional food products. A definition that included breeds of animals, species of fish, varieties of fruit and vegetables, as well as traditional foods both commercially and home produced. It was testament to her growing reputation as a scholar and writer that Laura was chosen to undertake this mammoth task for Britain together with Catherine Brown, doing the painstaking research and then producing a wonderful book that is as much fun to dip into and read as it is useful as a reference.

'Always in demand as a speaker, Laura gave lectures for organizations from the Ministry of Agriculture to York City Art Gallery and contributed to local and national radio programmes. From the late 1990s Laura was involved with

the Leeds Symposium and she became a regular contributor, editing *Food and the Rites of Passage* (2002) and eventually taking over as chair from Anne Wilson. Latterly she contributed to and helped to edit *The Domestic Dairy* (2018) and the forthcoming *Moulded Foods*, guiding the production of those volumes with her knowledge as an accomplished and experienced author. Her tragic death at what most would consider a relatively young age after a battle with cancer will no doubt come as a shock to many and our thoughts are with her partner Derek and her family.'

Readers may enjoy listening to an hour-long podcast of an interview that Laura gave at the end of last year on her career in food history and on British traditional foods to the gastronomer Tanya Gervasi. The address to visit is <https://open.spotify.com/show/4saxSEScOd46B8k5AZ1B7i>. The number of the specific podcast is 27 in the series.

†ANITA STEWART

I am grateful to Barbara Santich for this notice of a great character in the Canadian food world to whom she was introduced when Ms Stewart enrolled with the University of Adelaide's gastronomy programme:

'It is with deep sorrw that we note the passing, in late October 2020, of Anita Stewart, self-styled 'food activist', broadcaster, journalist and author of 13 books, all celebrating Canada's food and food producers, its markets, restaurants and chefs.

'As much as she championed Canada, Anita took pride in Elora, the small historic village west of Toronto where she lived most of her life and where her writing career began, a small fund-raising recipe book for her local kindergarten. Before long her passion for food, people, community led to her first commercial book, *The Farmers' Market Cookbook* (1983), co-written with Jo Marie Powers with whom she also organized Canada's first culinary history symposium, Northern Bounty, in 1993. Inspired by the acclaimed Oxford Symposium, Northern Bounty brought together for the first time chefs and food producers from across the nation and, perhaps more importantly, gave rise to another of Anita's firsts, the national culinary organization Cuisine Canada, which has raised public awareness of the diversity of its regional foods.

'When, in 2003, the country's meat exports were suffering from misunderstanding related to 'mad cow disease' Anita conceived the 'World's Longest BBQ', calling on as many Canadians as possible to host a barbecue in support of local farmers and producers and, specifically, those affected by the BSE crisis. This event evolved into Food Day Canada, now held every year at the end of July or early August; its slogan is 'Putting Canada on the menu!' (fooddaycanada.ca).

'Completion of an M.A. in Gastronomy at the University of Adelaide,

Australia, further stimulated Anita's drive and energy. Her dissertation research led to her recruitment by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation to assist in the development of its Culinary Tourism Strategy. She also collaborated with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canadian Tourism Commission. With the University of Guelph she initiated the annual Good Food Innovation Awards in 2010 to recognize restaurants across Canada for culinary creativity with local ingredients.

'In 2006 I had the privilege of meeting many of Anita's extraordinarily broad network of friends and aquaintances and of witnessing their esteem and affection for her, first at the Northern Bounty conference in Winnipeg and subsequently on her home turf, where she organized all the practical details of an off-campus residential for nine of my international gastronomy students, including an historical evening walk through Elora, visits to a local farmers' market and aquaculture research station and glimpses into the treasures of the Canadian Cookbook Collection in the University of Guelph library.

'Anita's professional accomplishments have been recognized with many awards, including the prestigious Order of Canada, an honorary doctorate from the University of Guelph and appointment as the University of Guelph's "Food Laureate", a world first at any university. In 2012 she was inducted into the Taste Canada Hall of Fame for her contribution to Canadian culture and her influence on Canadian culinary writing, and was made a lifetime member in the Canadian Culinary Federation of Chefs and Cooks. Her books, too, have been widely acclaimed, *The Flavours of Canada: A Celebration of the Finest Regional Foods* (2000) winning two Cuisine Canada awards.

'On 30 October 2020, a day after her death, Niagara Falls was lit up in her honour, and she will be remembered in the Anita Stewart Alumni Food Laboratory under construction at the University of Guelph.'

1000 COOKBOOKS

The website is <www.ckbk.com> which offers, to paying members, the texts of many and various cookbooks, available on the Internet through your desktop or as an app on your iPhone. The range is impressive, the presentation matchless, and you will find many Prospect Books on the site. What is more, they pay their royalties promptly.

LEEDS SYMPOSIUM ON FOOD HISTORY AND TRADITIONS, 2021

The organizer, Mark Dawson, has sent information about current plans and events as the Symposium goes online for the duration of the present crisis.

As so often this information is in part irrelevant as composition and printing on *PPC* move more slowly than life itself, but I give it here in the hope that you will be able to catch up with it online. The overarching topic of this year's Symposium is Food and Health and the Zoom lectures are scheduled for Wednesday evenings (7.30 p.m. British time) from 24 February to 31 March. The list of speakers includes four who were due to talk at the cancelled 2020 Symposium (on the same subject) with two new additions. They are:

Iona McCleery – The healthy medieval diet;

Denise Amos – Food and its impact on the health of the urban working classes at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century;

Tig Lang – Abstaining from all gross food: a late fourteenth-century doctor's advice to a patient;

Ingrid Barton – In search of control: food beliefs, folklore and health;

Julia Ibbotson – Food and drink in Anglo-Saxon England and the effect on health: the myths debunked;

Rachel Small – Food, identity and humoral theory in early modern England: a case study from Leicestershire.

Registration for these events is presently limited to those who have previously registered with the Leeds Symposium, but it is most likely that they will become available on some other platform than Zoom. All enquiries should be addressed to <secretary@leedsfoodsymposium.org.uk>.

KITCHEN ARTS & LETTERS

Their address is 1435 Lexington Avenue, New York (212-876-5550) and can be reached online at <kitchenartsandletters.com>. This bookstore, founded in 1983 by Nach Waxman, who still goes strong, now joined by managing partner Matt Sartwell, is the American beacon of any self-respecting food book publisher (and food studies journal editor) in Britain and Europe. I have been reminded of their constant support over many years by the presence of *PPC* on their website at some stage in recent months. On my only visit to America and Kitchen Arts I was struck forcibly by their catholic approach to books about food – it's not just a cookbook store. The wonders of the Internet mean that its riches are available to all of us.

GENERAL WILLIAM DYOTT (1761–1847)

I spent some pleasant days recently reading this man's diaries, published as *Dyott's Diary, 1781–1845*, ed. Reginald W. Jeffery, by Constable in two volumes in 1907. He was not a tremendously military general, which is to say that his career was not forged from the clash of bayonets or whistling musket-balls, but it was honourable, and involved quite a lot of attendance on the royal family.

It's domestic details are not of first-rate significance, although the portrait of a conservative spirit raging against the incoming tide of reform is eloquent, particularly in these days of splenetic and resurgent conservatism. There were, however, two items I thought worth retelling. The first was his account of the Walcheren expedition of 1809 (a moment when he really did see active service). The expedition was planned as a second front against Napoleon in the Low Countries; it was a disaster, famous only for the dread Walcheren Fever which put paid to more souls than did enemy fire. Dyott is in command of a brigade, his nephew Thurston Dale is acting as his ADC. He decides to give a dinner to all the officers of the brigade when out in the field but is strapped for personnel. 'My aide-de-camp, Thurstan, assisted in the kitchen, and our cookery under his directions and the execution of a butcher of the 8th regiment, we made out very well.' A nice example of the gentry classes being more capable than one might think in matters culinary.

A second observation that caught my eye dates from 1826, by which time the General had retired from active service and had taken on the family estate in Staffordshire, where he served as a magistrate. At the quarter sessions in Stafford, he reported, 'Poaching had arrived at an alarming pitch of audacity; gangs are now collected to overawe the keeper and to set resistance at defiance. The increasing luxuries occasioned by wealth and riches, and the prevalence of the human mind, to cope with, and imitate those above us in rank and station, induces the means to gratify this sort of ambition, by supplying the tables and gratifying the palates of a certain description of persons in life heretofore unused to indulge in providing *game* for their guests, but which in modern days forms as regular a *remove* for the pampered appetite of the monied merchant as it does for the ducal board. As long as the markets are so high they are sure to be supplied; the temptation is so great and the return so sure, it is no wonder so many run the risk to maintain the prize.' Poaching was something of a preoccupation, for he was a keen shot. He is commenting here on the social mobility occasioned by the great bubble of 1825–6 and the uppity nature of mercantile consumption (I have mentioned his rabid conservatism). This worry about poaching, although not about the tables of the middle classes, is also reflected in the memoranda of Robert Smith Surtees, printed in *Robert Smith Surtees, 1803–1864*, by Himself and E.D. Cuming (Blackwood, 1924).

A.R.T. KEMASANG'S REPLY TO HIS CRITICS

A little debate is always to be encouraged and after Gilly Lehmann's comments on Taunus Kemasang's reflections on the place of eggs and chicken in Western and Oriental diets and thoughts about food, he has delivered this reply:

'Let's deal with the easiest bit first. I have been working for a good part of my life with my attempt at a comparative study on the Occidental and

Oriental cultures from the perspective of food and foodways. I have written it up at diverse stages, from using different makes of manual typewriters to transferring and re-transferring my ever lengthening text between computers both on Microsoft and Apple operating systems. That and, after crossing oceans between two different cultural worlds plus doing odd-jobs to make ends meet, I repeatedly found unaccountable details of my text, including cited authorities, misplaced or even lost. Since I donated most of my old machines to charities, I am often unaware and unable to trace back the ones that I perhaps initially only misplaced. I apologize for misplaced and/or confused footnoting.

'As for the text, from the literature available to me it was specifically Europe which had been decidedly mentioned by even the Eurocentric historians as having difficulty in feeding itself. Indeed, had this not been so obviously the case, we would not have a Marco Polo with his *il millione* this and *il millione* that, which he witnessed in awe in the legendary kingdom. Had Europe not had *comparatively* so much difficulty in feeding itself, Europe would not have embarked on voyages across the then literally unknown oceans. The much trumpeted "Voyages of Discovery", or other grandiose sounding titles, if stripped of its layers of braggadocio, were nothing more than Europe's voyages of desperation as triggered by its centuries-long food scarcity.

'The contrast cannot be starker than when we take the case of Europe, which was still agonizing whether or not to risk life and limbs to sail off-shore, with what China had done so about a decade earlier – not, notably, similarly in search of food – but to show off its manufactured goods for further trade with more foreign countries. All this can also be gauged from the fact that said Marco Polo was clearly bowled over when he arrived in China. And he was not the only one.

'Other early visitors to China often similarly remarked on how the Chinese on the whole had most reasons to be well contented with their lot. All that was reiterated among others by our own Robert Fortune, who travelled extensively in China between 1848 and 1851 while stealing plants) to order: "I fully believe that in no country of the world is there less real misery than in China… I doubt if there is a happier race anywhere than the Chinese farmer and peasantry." In sum, "China was self-sufficient in food, textiles, most minerals, and all the other necessities of life."

Yet another testimony is that of a Scottish witness, John Bell in 1763, albeit he was not referring specifically to food: "The streets were clean, straight, and broad; in some places covered with gravel, in others paved with flat square stones.… We travelled … along a fine road … which opened into a spacious street, perfectly straight, as far as the eye-sight could reach." Similarly, "Describing Chou-King-fu, a town in Chekiang province … its streets were 'paved with white stone'." As for those in Beijing, "The streets, in particular, are the finest in the world. They are spacious, neat, and straight. The canals

[too], which supply the city with water, have, at proper distances, commodious stone-bridges over them; and these canals are not only built with free-stone, on the sides, but the bottoms of them paved with broad cut-stones, in the neatest manner imaginable." Indeed, the fact that some of the very top upper-class Han Chinese used to have their feet bound – a fact that "China bashers" of all sorts are eager to keep hammering on about – at least indicates that quite large a part of the ground in China must have been properly surfaced; when those even in major cities as London and Paris were regularly impassable.

'In my piece, by noting how in Sinaean Asia food generally and rice in particular are revered to such an extent that they are practically venerated, and that Sinaean Asian children are brought up to treat them respectfully, I do not necessarily mean that Western children were indulged to be cavalier with their food. Still, the difference in the concomitant mental attitudes is easily gaugeable, if not quite clearly displayed, when in the last resort (e.g., when a child happened to be extraordinarily tantrummy) a Sinaean Asian mother would more often than not end up eating her child's food, whereas a Western mother would be more likely to be complicitly throwing the food in the bin. Here today's detractors can always say that the food was probably fed to their pig or, indeed, their farmyard bird (had there been any). On this I am afraid we might be drawn into a debate *ad nauseam*.

'Similarly, by my mentioning the use – or mis-use – of food as articles to have games (cheese rolling, egg racing, coleslaw bathing, etc), "fights" (*using* egg and/or Brussels sprouts as missiles), and for protesting (pouring drinks or soup on somebody's head, whacking a pie or two into ditto's face, throwing eggs, fruits, etc., to show dissatisfaction, e.g. to performers), I meant to say that these practices are so well entrenched in Western culture so that even the newspapers are confident of matter-of-factly reporting them. I did not suggest that "everybody" did it, as I am well aware that even in this day and age an increasing number of Westerners survive on free meals accorded them out of charity. As an aside, I might go so far as to imply that these practices were so *entrenched* in the Western psyche (hence, culture) that even a beggar – whenever he happened to have eaten enough and, shall we say, was still in the possession of three eggs or Brussels sprouts – would without hesitation use at least one of them as a ready missile to show his anger. A similar "instinctive behaviour" would never cross the mind of a Sinaean Asian, even if he was rich and knew that he could well afford many more to waste.

'Further with regard to eggs, I thought my "eggs of all sorts of birds" clearly indicate those of all sorts of birds in the wild and, maybe, one's dovecote. In other words, all bird species bar the farmyard or "poultry" birds. It is the same with my proposition that "eggs were everywhere". Clearly what I meant here were "wild eggs", eggs that could be appropriated simply by climbing up trees in the wilds and ransack any bird's nests. Raiding farmyard chicken eggs was

certainly not what Prue Leith meant when she encouraged people to have free omelettes by raiding (and stealing) wild bird eggs. Further on this, Europeans would likewise not have bothered to erect and maintain dovecotes (many of which were substantial structures and which often took years to fill by enticing the doves from hither and yon), necessitating their upkeep with attendants etc., for merely the small quantity of meat on squabs if it were not for those fiddly, tiny dove eggs. Had much bigger hens' eggs been so ordinary and universally available, as alleged by my critics, perhaps they would not have bothered so much.

I also maintain that even the lowliest of French courtiers would not dream of demeaning their reputation and sense of dignity by carrying chickens around while accompanying their sires in prestigious royal tours, if chickens were so common and found everywhere. Nor would Henry IV risked becoming the popular laughing stock as a delusional village idiot for promising a single *poule* for every subject family, again had chicken been so common. No. Chickens were so rare that to most people getting hold of it was like winning a prize. Hence the depiction of the Dutch sailor's blissful smirk in the Japanese netsuke figurine I mentioned.

'Finally, I rest my case with the fact that the "craze" for chickens among the Europeans went on well into the nineteenth century. In the States particularly, celebrations, fetes and competitions were held for the poultry birds which had long been commonplace in Sinaean Asia at village celebrations, fetes and competitions where prizes were given. This was one more culinary debt that the West owes to Sinaean Asia generally and China in particular. Harold McGee remarks: "a few specimens of a previously unknown Chinese breed, the Cochin, [were brought to] Europe and the United States. These showy, spectacular birds, so different from the run of the [Western] barnyard, touched-off a chicken breeding craze comparable to the Dutch tulip mania of the seventeenth century. During this 'hen fever,' as one observer of the American scene called it, poultry shows were very popular, hundreds of new breeds were developed, and the chicken took on new prominence among farm animals. Of course, appearance was not the only consideration in breeding, and by the end of the century the white Leghorn had emerged as the champion layer, and descendants of the Cornish the best meat bird."

'Taken from China to England and the US in 1845, "Cochin" or "Cochin China" was in fact a Shanghai fowl. The *Oxford Companion to Food* notes: "Numerous fowl of Asiatic origin came into Britain, often acquiring names which had little to do with their origins. Cochins may have actually come from Shanghai; and Brahmas came to England via N. America, possibly from China."

Earlier, in 1784, the US clipper *Empress of China* brought back, besides tea, wallpaper and many other China goods, "some roosters from Shanghai" which became "the forebears of the succulent chicken in today's Bucks County, Pennsylvania." Another chicken breed which has likewise enriched US poultry

is the "Java", introduced from the then colonized Dutch East Indies in 1835.

'In common with the story of most culinary arrivals, but probably sooner than such American tubers as taro and potato, it took about a century for chicken to become widely available in Europe. Throughout the decades prior to their becoming available everywhere, chickens might well have to be fought for in a fashion not substantively different from the common and widely available ham. According to Athenaeus, when ham was served (as it always was) at Gaulish banquets, "the bravest man was given the upper part of it, and if any other man disputed his right to it, the two of them fought to the death in single combat."

'In all the literature available to me I never came across a mention of people in Sinaean Asia or China fighting to the death for a scrap of food…

'Finally, allow me to conclude by taking this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to my critics, for privileging me with their criticisms which enable me to learn a little bit more for my argument(s), as I learn quite a bit more from every single opportunity and, particularly perhaps, criticisms in whatever form.'

SOPHIE COE PRIZE 2021

The following is the text of the circular announcing this year's prize:

'The Sophie Coe Prize is awarded each year to an engaging, original piece of writing that delivers new research and/or new insights into any aspect of food history. We welcome entries of up to 10,000 words on any relevant topic. The Prize is £1,500 for the winning essay, article or book chapter. Authors may submit one entry only each, and they must be delivered to us by this year's closing date of Friday 23rd April 2021.

'The Prize was founded in 1995 in memory of Sophie Coe, the eminent anthropologist and food historian. The winner is selected by our anonymous panel of distinguished judges and announced in early July.

'Published and unpublished work may be submitted. If the former, it must have been published within 12 months of the submission deadline. If the latter, it must be in immediately publishable form.

'Before submitting an entry please read in full the "How to Enter" page at our website <sophiecoeprize.wordpress.com/how-to-enter/>. Entries that do not comply fully with our conditions of entry will not be put forward to our judges. We also advise entrants to read some of the former winning entries to get a good understanding of the kind of original research work we are seeking.

'For full details, and to sign up for reminders and updates on the Prize, please consult our website at sophiecoeprize.wordpress.com. Any queries not answered by the information on our website should be addressed to the Chair,

Dr Jane Levi, at email address <sophiecoeprize@gmail.com>.

'The Prize is administered by the Sophie Coe Memorial Fund, a registered Charity in England and Wales (no. 1048753). Trustees: Sarah Coe, Phil Iddison, Jane Levi, Candida Macdonough, Kaori O'Connor.'

Having printed in the last issue Vicky Hayward's excellent essay, which was specially commended in the 2020 Prize, it is which much pleasure that we produce for you in this present issue the winner of the 2020 Prize, Susanne Belovari's essay on Viennese cuisine before the War.

ALIMENTUM

Some of our readers may be familiar with the somewhat high-energy gastronomic review *Alimentum*. It had a print life from 2005 to 2012, then moved online <alimentumjournal.com>, then stopped a few years after that. It has announced that the website, and the archive, will be taken down in the first quarter of 2021. So if you wish to browse, lose no time – unless you understand the workings of the Internet Archive.

IEHCA/CoReMA ONLINE 17–29 MAY, 2021

In a blizzard of acronyms has come word of a big online affair as follows: 'The online symposium "The Culinary Recipe from the XIIth to the XVIIth centuries (Europe, Islam, Far East)" will be held from 17th to 29th May 2021. This is both the conclusive [?concluding] conference of the international research program CoReMA (Cookery Recipes of the Middle Ages: Corpus, analysis, visualization) and the first act of the Micrologus Conference supported by UAI and POLEN laboratory, "Between workshop and court: The recipe from the XIIth to the XVIIth centuries (Europe, Islam, Far East)". The second act of the Micrologus conference will be held in 2022.'

Submissions to this conference/symposium had to be in by the end of 2020, but it's not too late to consider registration. The project website is <https://glossa.uni-graz.at/context:corema> and you should perhaps look at that to discover the meaning of anything you don't understand.

CAPTAIN GRONOW AND SALLY LUNN CAKES

I include this short gem from lockdown reading as a perfect example of mythologies surrounding the origins of foodstuffs, a subject much to the liking of Alan Davidson. Sally Lunn cakes indeed caused some head-scratching when his *Companion to Food* was in progress, and I am not sure that Captain Gronow would have helped.

Rees Howell Gronow (1794–1865), writer, was the eldest son of William Gronow, a prosperous Welsh landowner of Court Herbert, Glamorgan.

A dandy, raconteur and occasional soldier, he is most celebrated for his *Reminiscences*. The following excerpt comes from *The Reminiscences and Recollections of Captain Gronow* (1888 edition, 1st published 1862):

'Sally Lunn Cakes — The Etymology of the Word "Bun." — Some fifty years back or thereabouts, Albinia, Countess of Buckinghamshire, lived in her charming villa in Pimlico, surrounded by a large and beautiful garden. It was here she used to entertain the *élite* of London society with magnificent *fêtes*, *bals champêtres*, and public breakfasts. After one of those *fêtes*, I called one morning to pay my respects; and, on ringing the bell, the servant ushered me into the conservatory, where I found Lady Harrington, the celebrated cantatrice Mrs. Billington, and the Duke of Sussex; who was said to be very much *épris* with the English "Catalini," as she was called.

'Mrs. Billington was extremely beautiful, though it was absurd to compare her to Catalini as a singer; but she was a favourite of the Duke of Sussex, which made her many friends. During my visit, chocolate and tea-cakes were served to our party, when Lady Harrington related a curious anecdote about those cakes. She said her friend Madame de Narbonne, during the emigration, determined not to live upon the bounty of foreigners, found means to amass money enough to enable her to open a shop in Chelsea, not far from the then fashionable balls of Ranelagh.

'It had been the custom in France, before the Revolution, for young ladies in some noble families to learn the art of making preserves and pastry; accordingly, Madame de Narbonne commenced her operations under the auspices of some of her acquaintances; and all those who went to Ranelagh made a point of stopping and buying some of her cakes. Their fame spread like lightning throughout the West End, and orders were given to have them sent for breakfast and tea in many great houses in the neighbourhood of St. James's. Madame de Narbonne employed a Scotch maid-servant to execute her orders, the name of this woman was "Sally Lunn," and ever since a particular kind of tea-cake has gone by that name.

'Madame de Narbonne, not speaking English, replied to her customers (when they inquired the name of her *brioches*), "bon;" hence the etymology of "bun," according to Lady Harrington: but I confess that I do not feel quite satisfied with her derivation.'

One nice point to be taken from this account is the remark that Mme de Narbonne, a noble (she was Marie-Adélaïde de Montholon, only daughter of the first president of the Parlement at Rouen, wife of Louis, Comte de Narbonne, the subject of an account in Benedetta Craveri's excellent study *The Last Libertines* [NYRB, 2020]), would have had childhood instruction in some elements of domestic economy such as preserves and pastry (*pâtisserie*). This accords with remarks by Balzac in some of his novels, who would accord greater facility in the practical aspects of life to nobles than to members of the

bourgeoisie.

OXFORD SYMPOSIUM 2021: FOOD AND THE IMAGINATION

I can do no more than reproduce the circular concerning this year's Symposium from the Registrar:

'At this the time we usually send out the Invitation to register for next year's Symposium (Food & Imagination – such a good subject for our times!). It'll come as no surprise that we don't yet know if it will be possible to hold a physical Symposium on 9–11th July at St. Catz in Oxford.

'Meanwhile, however, we are setting up a waiting list for those interested in attending a physical Symposium at St. Catz and are trying hard, with full co-operation and understanding from the College, to make it happen. We'll be able to let those on the list know by mid-March whether a physical gathering will be feasible or not. Until then, we won't be accepting registrations or taking payments for attendance. Meanwhile, here is the link to our website to add your name: <https://vsymp.oxfordsymposium.org.uk/2021-interest/>

'As for the virtual, online Symposium, we will continue this whether or not we can achieve a physical Symposium. As was the case in 2020, paper-presenters will be able to present their papers for discussion (deadline for proposals being 31 January 2021), guests will include the full complement of speakers and chefs, and the Proceedings will be edited and published in due course through the good offices of our Editor, Mark McWilliams.

'We do hope this finds you well. Do please join our informal monthly Kitchen Table events so that we can share the enthusiasm and camaraderie that's so much a part of the Oxford Symposium family.'

MORE ON TREDDES

In the last issue, we printed Barbara Tearle's enquiry about the significance of the object called a 'tredde' which she had found in certain kitchen probate inventories from Bedfordshire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Dr Eileen White, a stalwart of the Leeds Symposium, suggested that they might have something to do with the word 'treadle', that is to say, that they related to driving the spit by means of foot-power. Wright's *Dialect Dictionary* does make a firm distinction between words that sound like 'tredde' and those which sound like 'treadle', which may knock that theory on the head, but Caroline Davidson proposed a solution that does remain within the bounds of lexical possibility. She suggests, 'It's a stool or a small flight of moveable steps for use in reaching places and things, which in the context of an open hearth kitchen fireplace, were often out of reach. The *tredde* was not made of wood, which

would have burned away in such a situation, but of metal. The way to "get" its meaning is to think of the tread of a staircase and the well-known injunction to "*tredd*" (i.e. tread) carefully. The injunction makes perfect sense in the context of the constant need to be careful when tending an open hearth or cooking there – so as not to fall into the fire and get burned or to allow your clothing to catch fire, another commonplace danger.'

In further correspondence, she expanded her ideas: 'My deduction about the meaning and function of treddes comes from: (1) The importance of object association/proximity/juxtaposition in the same type of dedicated room and activity going on. The regular occurrence of treddes with a repertoire of other valuable metal kitchen equipment immediately poses the question of why they were valuable and how they "worked" together, including the exact function of each. (2) Ergonomic analysis of the difficulties involved in managing a boiling pot suspended over the fire e.g. adding and subtracting fluid and ingredients in succession, many times over. The main difficulty is to access the boiling pot without getting too hot or over-balancing when removing very hot and potentially bulky items from it and equally when trying to fish out some slippery small bits of food. (3) More ergonomic analysis of the challenges incurred in regulating any spit-roasting going on at the same time. Cooks needed to oversee this operation without getting roasted themselves. Removing cooked meat and birds from the spit was not easy without the enhanced purchase and distance enabled by treddes. (4) The knowledge that the cooks were of different heights and girths. A cooking pot suspended at one height suitable for one woman would be almost impossible for a young girl to reach – without treddes. (5) In addition to facilitating access to cooking pots and spits, cooks could also make use of treddes to distance themselves from the heat of the fire, i.e., provide "longer distance" from the fire and cooler access to the pot, the spits, etc.... These could all be arranged to be at the ideal height and distance. (6) The management of the fire itself was much easier when it could be fine-tuned from a distance afforded by the combination of long-handled shovels, rakes, etc., deployed from the treddes, as opposed to close-up without their help.'