



TALES & TASTINGS



Food is a basic human need. Eating is a sensory experience, which gives pleasure and connects us with our community. What we consume is an expression of our identity. In sharing food we can show kindness to others and celebrate our cultural and heritage.

Food history is a history of employment, manufacturing, advertising and consuming. It is a history of agriculture and animal husbandry. It is also a social history of families, generations, migration, and class. Ultimately it is a story of change and cultural diversity.

Thus extraordinary changes have taken place in Swanscombe, Ebbsfleet, and Northfleet over the last 100 years. The industrial revolution and ensuing urbanisation have turned a quiet rural area once 90% farmland into a huge housing development. Housing supply has replaced fields where once a plethora of crops produced a yield so great it supplied major fresh food markets of London. Locals bought their vegetables direct from the farmers, ensuring zero food miles. The high streets were full of small businesses, independent traders, and local produce. There was no plastic then. Grocery stores sold fruits, biscuits and bread in brown paper bags. The fish and chip shop gave a three penny discount to customers who brought newspapers with them to wrap their dinner in. And where a young woman wrote what would become a world famous cookery book in her house in Greenhithe, today a McDonald's stands near the site of Mrs Beeton's former home, as if to draw a final curtain on the past.

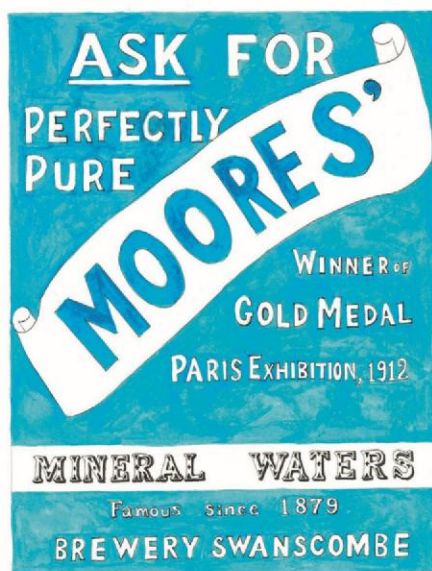
With the help of the people I have met, I have collected a small gathering of memories, fragments of tales and tastes from these towns. I have discovered local pride and hope; from the groups of loyal volunteers running the Lunch clubs and the youth groups, to the young entrepreneurs starting their own food production businesses. The allotment associations and initiatives such as the Edible Ebbsfleet project demonstrates that the possibility of growing local produce still thrives. Looking ahead, climate change presents a real and urgent threat to future generations. What more can we, as communities, do to ensure we live in a more sustainable and healthy way that benefits both our bodies and the environment in which we live?

Nicole Mollett 2019









## MOORES BROS SWANSCOMBE

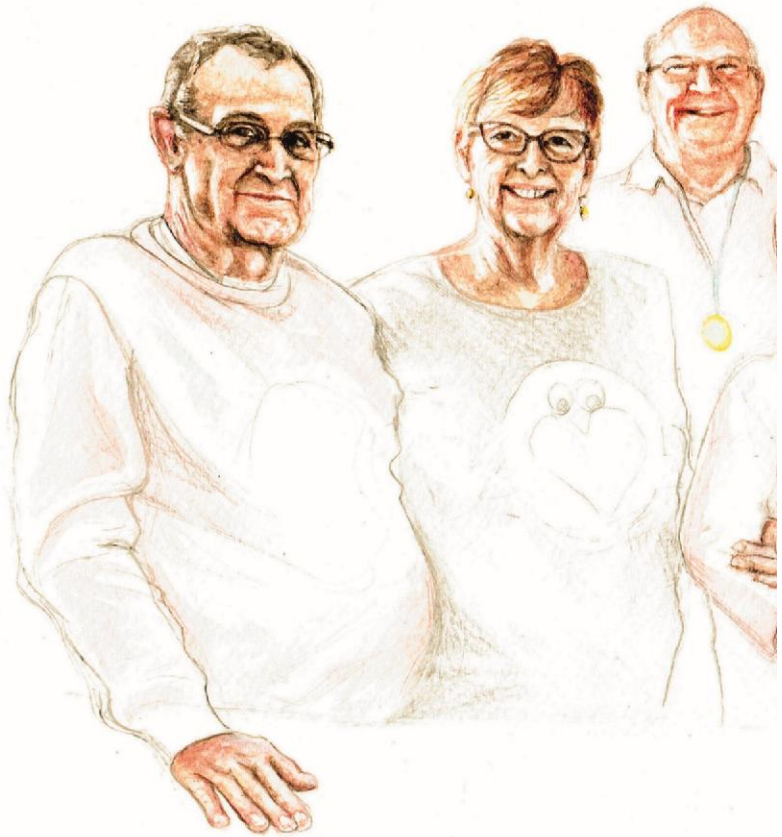
*Moores Mineral Waters was established by Mr. John Baker in 1870. Mr. Baker sold his homemade ginger beer in stone bottles from a wooden cart pulled by donkey. In 1879 a Mr. James Moore bought the business and, after he passed away, his widow became sole proprietor of the business. The business then passed down through successive generations of the same family.*

*The Moores family proceeded to build multiple factories and stores in Broomfield Road, and Milton Road. Two sons set up more factories in Bromley and Weymouth. During WW2 the factory became a hub for producing soft drinks for much of Kent and South East London, managed under the control of the Ministry of Food. During the 60s the plant was capable of turning out 5400 bottles per hour. The factory even possessed a machine which cleaned old bottles for reuse. Sadly Moore Brothers ceased trading in 1973.*

*Ginger Beer, Keg Bitter shandy, Amba Orange, King Cola, Lemonade, Cherryade, Orangeade, Still Lemon, Soda Syphons, & Cream Soda*



Peggy Gillingham and her sister Mary Milton who worked at the Moores Factory in the 1950s.



**The Swanscombe Lunch Club volunteers**

Peter French, Susan Cherry, Maurice Milton, Beryl  
Whale, Derek Burton, Karen Milton, Gary Ribben.





*Swanscombe Senior Lunch club is a group run by volunteers, and has been going for five years. The club brings the community together, and the food is lovely. The Seniors really enjoy themselves, it is lovely to see them all singing and having a good time.*

Anonymous attendee.

**BARKERS ICE  
CREAM  
EGLINGTON ROAD,  
SWANSCOMBE**

A childhood memory

*'Barker's was the best ice cream available at the time in Swanscombe. I'd think every child knew of Barker's ice cream and the shop was open most of the time. Don't know what happened to Mr Barker's recipe for ice cream, but I'd imagine it would be worth a lot of money if someone had it today! They also had a large pushbike with a cold box at the front. On any public occasion Mr Barker would fill the pushbike with his lollies and wafers and sell them to the public. He did also ride around Swanscombe in the summer months, selling it all.*

*Barker's mainly sold cornets and wafers.*

*Mr Barker had a container filled with melted chocolate, which he dipped the cornets in.*

*He also made his own ice-lollies, in various flavours and sizes, which could also be dipped in the chocolate. He served them from behind a counter. Barker's also sold some groceries and had a large variety of sweets and chocolates.*

*Mr Barker wasn't very tall, and he had some large swellings on his head hence the nickname 'Nobby' Barker. He wore an apron. His wife helped in the shop, she wore glasses and was short and tubby. Their daughter sometimes helped, but she had a job elsewhere. After the parents died, the daughter, Ivy Barker, took over the running of the shop.'*

Thanks to Maureen Smith

**Flavours**

*Cider*

*Cherry Ice Lollies*

*Vanilla*

*Chocolate*

*Strawberry*

*Ice Creams dipped in*

*Chocolate*

*Coconut Ice*

# Barkers

*ice cream*



Magic  
chocolate

**dip!**



# SPRINGHEAD GARDENS



Watercress was first commercially grown in the UK in 1805 by entrepreneur horticulturist William Bradbery at Springhead in Northfleet.

The watercress was grown along the Ebbsfleet stream that was feeding the plants and also marking the parish boundary between Northfleet and Swanscombe. The Ebbsfleet originated from 8 springs. The befittingly named Springhead Gardens with its watercress beds also featured a pleasure garden, and later a museum with a collection of local Roman archaeological finds.



## Watercress Soup

1 tablespoon of olive oil  
9oz (250g) of watercress washed & with their stalks removed  
1 medium onion chopped  
1 stick of celery  
12oz (350g) potato peeled and diced  
150ml/1/4 pint of milk  
1pt (600ml) vegetable stock  
Pinch of nutmeg  
Squeeze of lemon juice  
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the onions and celery until golden. Add the potatoes and stock, and bring to the boil. Allow them to simmer for 10 minutes. Add the watercress and cook for a further 5 minutes, or until the watercress softens. Let the soup cool slightly and transfer it to a mixer and blend. Add the nutmeg and lemon juice and season to taste. Slowly stir in the milk, a little at a time, whilst gently reheating. Serve with a side of crusty bread and sprigs of watercress to garnish.

What is so special about Watercress? Watercress is a rapidly growing semi-aquatic leaf, and one of the oldest vegetables known, that was eaten by prehistoric people. Watercress was a staple of both the Roman Soldier and the working class in England. The scientific name for watercress is *Sisymbrium Nasturtium*. It contains more vitamin C than an orange, more calcium than milk, and more iron than spinach. The plant is packed with antioxidants, which help prevent diseases, such as diabetes, and cancer. It is brimming with beta-carotene and vitamin A, which are great for healthy skin and eyes.



# THE MISTRESS OF MOUNT PLEASANT

Isabella Beeton lived at Mount Pleasant cottage in Greenhithe. Her *Book of Household Management* contained 2000 recipes and sold over 60,000 copies in the year it was first published. She was a journalist, editor, and writer, but had virtually no experience of keeping a house, or cookery. Due to the book's popularity, Mrs. Beeton became a household name, and myth, often described as "the grandmother of modern domestic goddesses".



**Pig's Face**

**Calf à Tongue**

**Sponge Pudding**

**Heart**

**Blancmange à la Vanille**

**Giving advice to many women**

**She was brave**

**She encouraged extraordinary women**

**Hardworking and admirable**

**eateth not the drop of idle tears**

**Modern thinkers know that knowledge is power.**

**She is the first and the last: the Alpha and the Omega of her age and the government of her country.**

**She is therefore a power of far more importance than the world thinks.**

**Let the men of our day read the One and the Other and the government of our day will rise.**

**Bella travelled by train to London every day. Her presence caused a stir among the commuters, (most of whom were male.)**

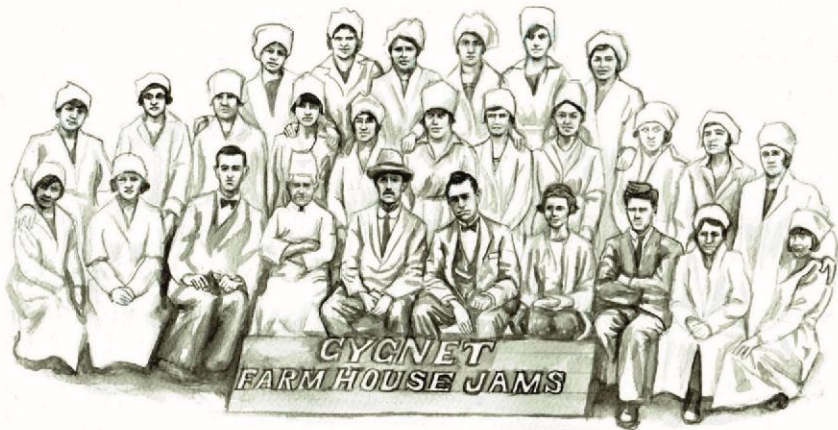
**Bella gave birth to four children, two of whom survived. Sadly, Bella got a fever eight days after the birth of her 4th child, Mayson. She was only 28 years old when she died.**

**She researched and tested each recipe**

**Improving instructions & listing ingredients & adding colour pictures**

# CYGNET JAM FACTORY MANOR FARM, SWANSCOMBE

Manor Farm was one of the oldest farms in Swanscombe, and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. John and Jack Gunn (1890s to 1950s) were local councillors and tenants of Manor Farm, as well as running a jam factory to process their fruit. The factory burnt down in the 1920s and Manor House was demolished in 1963 to make way for the new council offices.



*'Aunt Dolly is the third from the right on the very back row. Dorothy May Parris, as she was known at the jam factory before marriage when she became Mrs Cogger. She was born in 1905, left school at 14, and worked at the jam factory in the early 1920s before she left to marry Albert Cogger in 1926. For her last few months before leaving she was joined at the factory by one of her younger sisters'.*

Thanks to Derek Parris.



## **Traditional Strawberry Jam**

1.3 kg (3lb) strawberries, hulled and wiped, washed and dried

Juice of a large lemon (2x table spoons)

1.3 kg granulated sugar

Put the fruit in a large pan with the lemon juice and simmer gently until the juices begin to run, about 10 minutes. Mash the strawberries down and continue to simmer for 5mins until it becomes a thick puree. Remove from the heat. Add the sugar and stir the mass until completely dissolved. Bring to the boil for 5 minutes, before removing the scum and testing for a set. To test for a set, chill a plate in the fridge then put a teaspoon of jam onto the plate. Let it cool for 1 minute. Touch the surface of the jam with a spoon, if it wrinkles the jam has reached setting point. Once set pour the jam into cool sterilised jars and seal.

## THE KIND FARMER

John Gunn was a tenant of Manor farm and the owner of the Cygnet Jam Factory. After the First World War German prisoners were made to work digging ditches at the farm. It was hard work, and they had to walk quite a way to and from the camp, which was in Darenth Parish. The farmer found the Germans eating leftover tops and weeds in desperation.

Mr Gunn took pity on the men and gave them a much-needed meal. Even though the war had officially ended, and all of the Swanscombe POWs had returned home, it was still illegal to feed German prisoners, and so Mr Gunn was taken to court in 1919.

The record from the petty session court reads as follows:  
*'26.4.1919: Mr John Edwin Gunn at Dartford Petty Sessions charged with feeding German POWs. POWs from Gore Camp, Dartford, marched to Swanscombe to perform heavy digging. The guard said yes, when Mr Gunn wanted to feed the men so that they could perform the heavy task – each had half a loaf of bread and a bottle of ginger beer – they had been found eating parsnip tops. Chairman of Petty Sessions said Germans should not be fed, despite working 8-9 hours and having to march from and to Gore Camp. Mr Gunn fed them Chinese bacon and potatoes on another occasion. In Gore Camp they get breakfast at 6.30am of coffee and a little bread and cheese. Mr Gunn wondered how the police found out – The Germans didn't tell them! Mr Gunn pleaded guilty and was fined 40/-.'*

Christoph Bull





*'Northfleet on the Shore is most delightfully situated at the southern-eastern extremity of the reach called the Northfleet Hope (mark the archaism). Then the same authority dilates pleasantly upon the gastronomic enjoyments of fish dinners, with the speciality of shrimps at tea, which London visitors were wont to indulge in then just as they do today.'*





*'After school and in the holidays I used to go to Chambers Farm to pick blackberries and raspberries with my mum. We were paid per box. We would put a string around our waists and hold the boxes on the string.'*

Thanks to Joyce Leech of Northfleet Lunch Club

## PEARSONS GROCERY STORE NORTHFLEET

Pearsons was a general grocery store on Northfleet High Street, owned by William and Christine Pearsons. They stocked everything, ran deliveries to many businesses including the ships and cement coasters, which arrived at the cement works. Inside the shop there was a long counter display of biscuit tins. Customers could pick and buy a mix of biscuits from the tins, which were weighed using metal scales. Mrs Pearsons was a wonderful lady. She was a lay preacher at Wood St. Chapel. She was very kind. She had a daughter named Monica.

Every Friday afternoon Mrs. Pearsons would stand outside the shop and hand out free biscuits to the children on their way home from school. Every Sunday after Sunday school, the children who came were invited back to the Pearsons for tea and cakes.

Thanks to Brian, who worked as a delivery boy at the shop from 1951-52



# BARON NATHAN ROSHERVILLE PLEASURE GARDENS

Barnett Nathan was born in Canterbury in the 1790s. He was the son of the Cantor of the local synagogue. His father, Menechem Mona, was Polish by birth, and had been sent to England in his youth to be raised by German Jewish friends of his parents.

Barnett began as a dancing instructor at Kennington Cross. He then went on to be employed as Master of Ceremonies at the Tivoli Gardens in Margate. In 1841, at 48 years of age, he made a career move to the Rosherville Gardens, Northfleet, where he spent every summer until his untimely death in 1856.

The Baron was a very popular and courteous man, blessed with great charm. His exploits were often mentioned in Punch magazine. He was adept at persuading shy members of the opposite sex to participate in dances, whether polkas, waltzes, or other new dances (despite the objections of attending Roman Catholic priests!). An article in the Theatrical

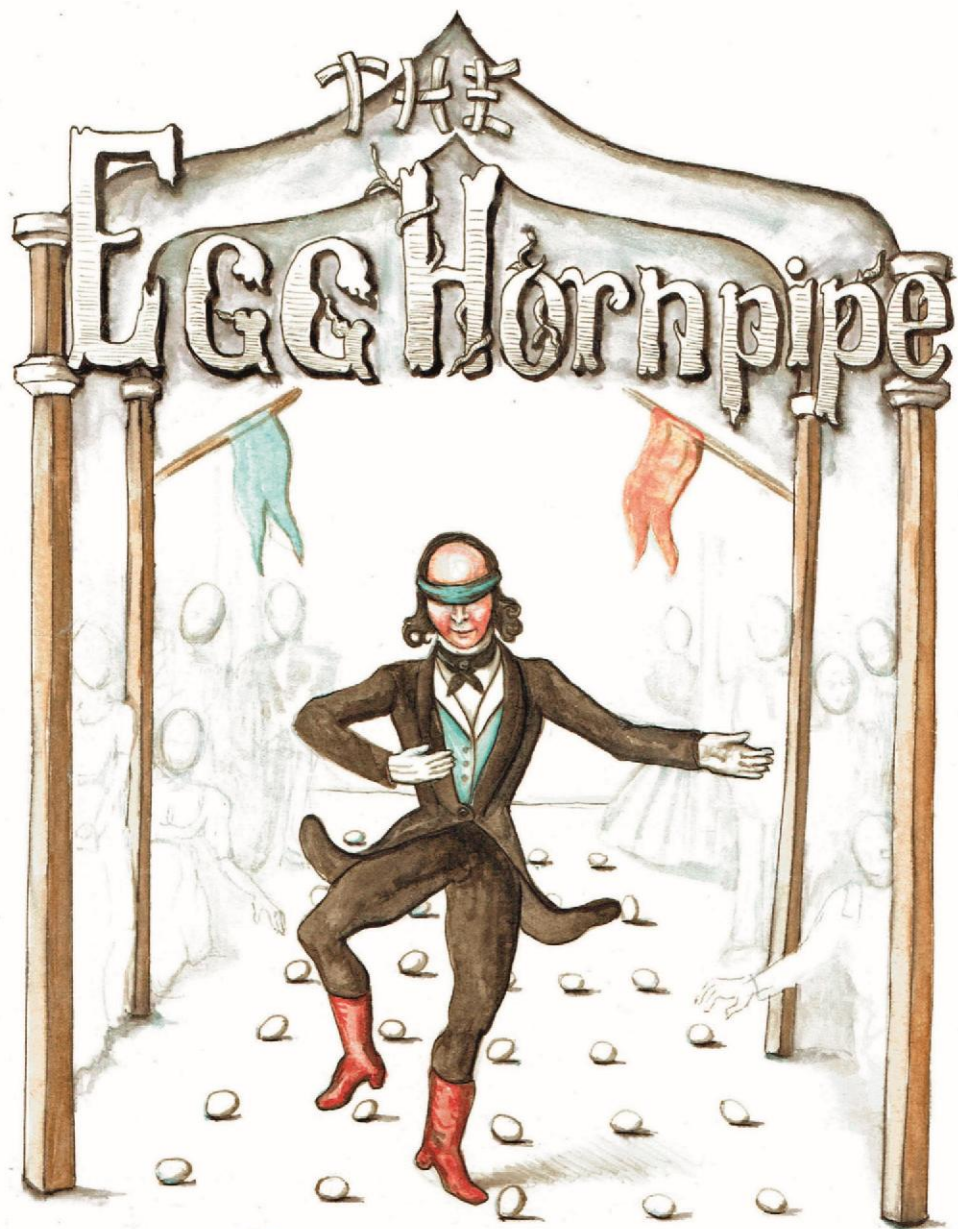
Journal in 1842 described him as ‘about five feet five in height, and invariably costumed in black, save on his benefit, and then his body is encircled by a killing waistcoat’. He was slim and agile, with hair so long that the curls swirled around ‘Medusa-like’ as he danced.

His most famous performance was entitled the ‘Egg Hornpipe’. This dance involved laying 30 raw eggs on the floor, over which he frolicked blindfolded without breaking a single egg, whilst accompanying himself on a two-stringed fiddle. The act often degenerated as members of the audience stole his eggs, to leave the Baron dancing intricately up and down the stage over eggs that were no longer there.

He is remembered with great warmth by the famous Victorian Journalist G.A Sala:

*‘The Poor Baron, with his corkscrew ringlets, turned down collar and limber legs... dancing that undying pas, blindfolded among the eggs and tea things, in the Gothic Hall at Rosherville.’*





BARON NATHAN



## Pease Pudding

Often served with Faggots in Northfleet

1lb Split Yellow Peas, soaked overnight in plenty of water

1 small Potato, finely chopped

1 Onion, finely chopped

Pinch of Salt

A Little Pepper

1 Clove of Garlic

½ tsp. Dried Thyme

2 Bay Leaves

A Little Bit of Butter

Rinse the peas in a sieve under cold running water and drain.

Put the peas in a bowl and cover with hot water. Leave to stand for 20 minutes.

Heat the butter in a heavy-based frying pan and cook the onion, thyme and bay leaf very gently for 15 minutes, or until softened and only just beginning to colour. Stir regularly.

Drain the peas and add to the pan. Pour over 1¾ pints water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat slightly and simmer for 30-40 minutes, or until the peas soften and start falling apart. The liquid should be well reduced by this time. Cut the onion in half and stud each piece with cloves.

Take the peas off the heat, remove the bay leaf and blend with a hand blender until a thick purée. Beat in the remaining butter nutmeg and the egg and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Spoon the pea mixture into the centre of a piece of muslin. Tie the ends tightly with kitchen string just above the peas, allowing a little room for expansion.

Tuck the pease pudding and onion into the pan. Add the carrot, celery, bay leaves and peppercorns. Fill the pan with enough cold water to cover the pudding and return to the hob. Bring to a simmer, cover loosely with a lid and cook for 1 hour.

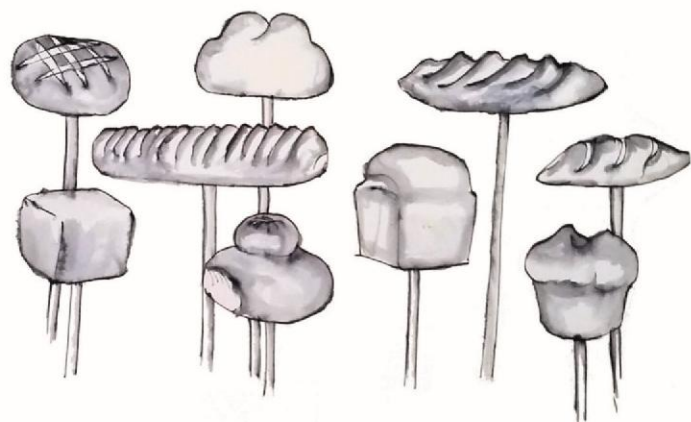
## THE MONSTER RALLY

In 1873 the increasing industrialisation of Swanscombe village, coupled with pollution and the unsightly appearance of pits and factories infuriated some of Swanscombe's older families. Under the leadership of Mr S.C. Umbreville of Ingress Abbey, they attempted to have the cement works closed by court action. This effort signalled the last struggle of old Swanscombe against new industrial developments.

The pro-cement lobby was well organised under the Rector of Swanscombe, the Reverend T.H. Candy. They organised a huge march and rally, which met at the Rectory Meadow in Swanscombe. The procession consisted of some 5,000 people from Stone, Greenhithe and Northfleet in addition to those of Swanscombe. The marchers were cement employees fearing for their jobs with banners and loaves of bread on sticks symbolising their daily bread provided by employment. Shopkeepers, shipping personnel and others joined in led by brass bands. This monster rally on 24 August 1874 eventually persuaded Mr Umbreville and his allies to drop their case.

Christoph Bull









*'The Northfleet Lunch club is a place to meet and make new friends. They serve real home-cooked food. It has been running since the 1980s. I open up more here, than when I meet someone in the street. People who come have their own regular seats.'*

Anonymous attendee



*'Daisy Ann Driscoll nee Gardener was my  
Grandmother and my Dad's Mum. She lived  
at Northfleet Green Farm in Southfleet'*

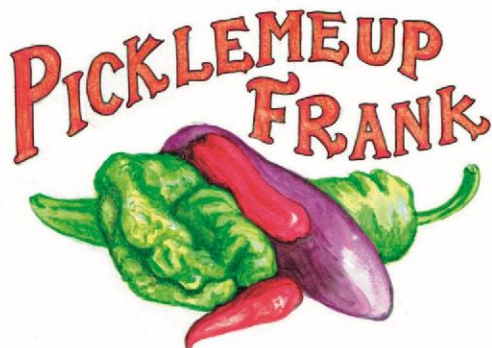
Thanks to Mandi Knight.



## **Piccalilli Driscoll Recipe**

Cut up a good sized marrow peeled and freed from seed. Same with cauliflower. Peel shallots or small onions, leave whole. Place in a bowl and sprinkle well with salt. Leave for 24 hours & then strain off. Put in pan with enough vinegar to cover with ½lb sugar & a few chillies & boil until tender.

Mix 4oz mustard with 1oz of turmeric in vinegar to a paste. Stir into pickle & let simmer for ½ hour stirring occasionally. Bottle & when cold its ready for use.



## PICKLE ME UP FRANK

Pickle Me Up Frank (PMUF) is a Swanscombe-based company that has been running since 2017. They produce small batches of chellies and chilli sauces using their own chillies, the varieties of which are specially chosen to suit each product's pungency and flavour. They try to grow ecologically by reducing the amount of peat used and reusing plastic pots.

Nicole Mollett asked Oliver Matys a few questions about starting his own company.

### **Q. How did you get interested in growing Chillis?**

I was looking for red jalapeños, but eventually I found that they don't sell any locally so I decided to grow some myself and the rest sort of caught on from there. Also my mum was growing chillis when I was much younger and me and her partner used to eat them straight off the plants to see how hot they were. I found recipes and tried different things. I also like the science behind the making.

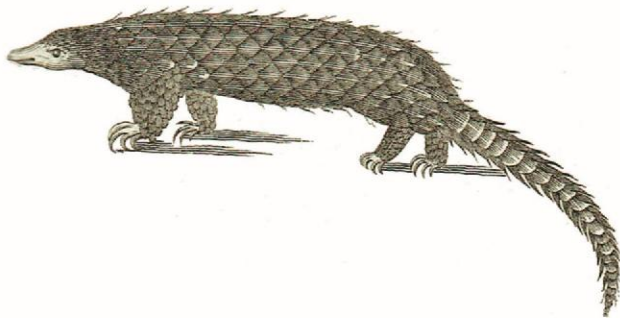
### **Q. 'Pickle me up Frank' is an unusual and great name for a jam, can you tell me what made you think of it?**

I wanted to register the company with the local council and it took ages to find a name. My family gave me lots of suggestions and then between these ideas came 'Pickle me up Frank'. Frank is the name of my youngest brother.

### **Q. What is the best part about making your own produce?**

The best part in growing your own produce watching how from a tiny seed can come so much produce.





*'My mum, my little sister and I once tried to make cupcakes. We never knew why but we somehow made them near rock solid on the outside and near impossible to eat, but the inside was soft and fluffy! We agreed to name them Armadillo cakes. They were actually delicious.'*

Andy Underwood, age 15, Swanscombe





THANKS TO ALL...

COOKS, BAKERS, BREWERS, BUTCHERS,  
PIE-MAKERS and MARINATORS

SEED SOWERS, VEGETABLE GROWERS,  
COMMUNITY GARDENERS, FARMERS  
and FRUITS PICKERS,

LUNCH CLUB VOLUNTEERS, CARERS,  
FOODBANK HELPERS and DINNER LADIES,

SHELF STACKERS, CHECKOUT STAFF  
and SHOP MANAGERS, BISCUITIERS,  
JAM and PICKLE MAKERS

CHEESEMONGERS, FISHMONGERS,  
MASTER CHEFS and WAITERS,  
BLANCHERS, BOILERS, POACHERS,  
BRAISERS, KNEADERS, STIRERS,  
SIMMERERS and STEAMERS,

STREET TRADERS, ICE CREAM  
VANS, RECIPE WRITERS, CAKE  
MAKERS, CHOCOLATIERS

HUNGRY MOUTHS, FOODIES,  
MUNCHERS, GLUTTONS and DIETERS,

MUMS & DADS that COOK, and  
THOSE who DO the WASHING UP

Drawings by Nicole Mollett

End paper drawings *Are You What You Eat?* by Year 10 pupils of Ebbsfleet Academy

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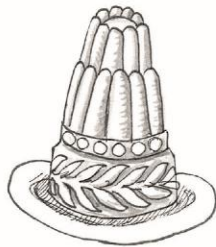
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Nicole Mollett 2019