

Don't Talk Tripe – Eat It

Mr Ramsden was born in 1924 and interviewed in 1995

I was born in Keighley in my grandfather's tripe dressing place.

We moved to Kendal and I remember going up to Moss Lane End to see all the Jarrow Hunger marchers coming down. They all stopped at the Drill Hall in Kendal that night. But our main thing was watching the fish wagons come through. The special little Leyland wagons could pass everything. I once had the privilege of having a ride in one of them. Six speed gear box they had. I talked about it for weeks afterwards.

I started work as an apprentice butcher with Mr Sedgewick in the Market Place. My sister also worked for Mr Sedgewick but she was a hairdresser. He had the butchers shop on the ground floor and the hairdresser was up above it at one side and a chiropodist on the other side. After the war they extended the original slaughter house on Appleby Road opposite the auction house.

Everybody killed their own meat. All the butchers went and got their meat at the public slaughter house on a Monday. Some of it was killed on Monday, some was killed on Tuesday. They used to sell everything. There was a market for everything sheep's heads, pig's heads, pig feet. Sedgewick used to send me round town buying the rough bits of meat for two or three pence a pound then boil it up and it made good potted meat.

The butcher numbers went down. In the old days there were six butchers in Gillingate. If you started near the Cock and Dolphin, the Co-op had a butcher's shop just round the corner opposite the Parish Church then there was Charlie Ralph, he used to run a Ford car. Then a bit further up there was Mawsons Pork Butchers and the other side of the road there was Freddie Underhill. Just up Highgate was my boss's brother then from there, if you went up Allhallows Lane there was Roths pork butchers and Myers and Syd Robinson. All those lot up there along with the Argentine Meat Company, that was next to the Rainbow pub. There was Brennand's on Stricklandgate and down Finkle Street. The two Dodds brothers were next to St. George's cinema. They both wore bowler hats and smoked Woodbine cigarettes. In Wildman Street there was Tom Cook and then on the corner of Ann Street was the Co-op. Another strange thing about all these old butchers there was quite a few that only had one hand. Jim Sedgewick who I worked for and Jim Sowerby's father-in-law and Milliard did. I don't know where all their hands went, probably in the sausages.

We had an old book, a little book it was. On the front it said, "Don't talk Tripe, eat it" and it was full of tripe recipes. I know I should never have given them books away. I should have kept one for myself. I used to sell tripe wholesale. Get plenty of tripe down you I say. They used to say in the wartime "If you can't eat chicken, eat tripe." It was like a slogan.

My butcher friend at Ambleside, he sells tripe I get a bit off him sometimes. But for this hot weather, a nice piece of tripe out of the fridge, cool, in a salad, you can't beat it. Put a bit of boiled ham on it as well and a bit of mustard. Lovely. I used to sell tripe and one of my best customers was the hospital in Kendal. People with ulcers and all that sort of thing, it was very good for them. There's a lot of protein in tripe as well.

On a Tuesday morning I used to have to go to Archdeacon Lefone's house with the meat and that. Mrs Lefone was a hell of a nice person and I used to pray for it to rain and if it was raining she'd say to her maid "Make the lad a cup of tea and a bacon sandwich" he's wet through. Sit down and warm yourself by the fire. I used to think it was great you know getting a bacon sandwich. Then she'd come trundling through "Here you are sonny that's all the

change I have - three and sixpence." Well I only had seven and sixpence wages for a week so I used to hope for rain on a Tuesday morning.

Another customer, a lady, used to come in a Rolls Royce with a chauffeur and park outside the shop. And she'd come in, "Good morning Mr Sedgewick" she'd say and he would say "What would you like today?" So she said "I'll have half a lamb and some cutlets". "Have you got any calf's liver. When you get the spring lamb I'll have the first one" and such like. "Right Ho" he'd say "It will be a bit dear but ..." "Oh well , we'll not worry about that as long as you know" That's how the conversation used to go on. She talked right posh. Then she used to say "Will the boy put it in the car?" So I'm the boy you see. All I had to do was walk across the pavement and the chauffeur used to give me half-a-crown. I allus had a clean brat (apron) when she was coming.

Interview No. R0050

© Kendal Oral History Group