

Pudding-Pie Fair

There was a Winter Fair, otherwise known as the 'Pudding-Pie' Fair, in the Market Place each year on 22nd November (Old Martinmas Day).

It was principally a fair for the sale of horses (e.g. Welsh cart colts), as well as cattle, sheep and pigs. In addition, there were various stalls or bazaars, selling all kinds of toys, small wares, cakes etc.

At the 1854 fair an additional attraction was the "celebrated Wizard Wyatt, the Oxford magician" in the Town Hall, while the "well-known 'Cheap Johns' [stingy persons] spouted most lustily".

An innovation at the 1856 fair was a dancing booth, "where those who felt so disposed could trip it on the 'light fantastic toe'".

Although the police kept an eye out for undesirable elements, several instances of petty thieving were reported at the 1856 fair, and a spurious half-crown was passed off at the Unicorn Inn. At the 1858 fair there was a party of Birmingham "prigs", who were kept in check by the vigilance of the police.

In 1854 the fair day was enlivened by the presence of two recruiting parties from the Oxfordshire Militia and the Grenadier Guards, beating up for recruits. The former paraded the town with drum and fife. There were also two recruiting parties at the 1859 fair.

Curiously, the 1850s newspaper reports refer to the Winter Fair rather than Pudding-Pie Fair, and make no mention of the sale of pudding pies. This is in distinct contrast with the 1880s press cuttings in the Coggins Scrapbooks, Volume 2, which talk about a brisk trade in pudding pies, and even sales by parcel post.¹

For a fuller description of the history of the Pudding-Pie Fair, see Chapter 6 of Mary Vane Turner's *'The Story of Deddington'*, 1933.²

It also seems from lists of fairs in the *Oxford Journal* and *Banbury Guardian* that there was a regular market on the last Tuesday in each month.

¹ https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/17015/Scrapbook2IndexA.pdf

² <https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/publishedhistories/mvt/6.deddingtonfairs>