



The Melton Mowbray Assessment (white paper)

v2 2006-09-18

(revised from v1 for a serious reason far too silly to be published)

COPYRIGHT

the Zygma partnership LLC asserts ownership of all intellectual and copy rights in analytic material presented in this paper, with the exception of the quoted articles from The Times, copyright in which is vested in The Times.

DISCLAIMER

the Zygma partnership LLC has applied its best endeavours in the preparation of this paper which it freely distributes for public edification but accepts no liability arising from its use or application by any other parties, howsoever arising. Errors may have arisen in the sourcing of the foodstuffs used in this assessment and the analysis, whilst undertaken diligently and in good faith, may contain oversights or omissions, and in any event is subjective and performed in a general context, without regard to the dietary needs or preferences of any specific persons or their palates. Besides, there's no knowing what the Shiraz was doing to our faculties. Those who choose to act upon any statements or claims presented in this paper do so entirely at their own risk, in particular, that of their digestive systems. Persons having no sense of the ridiculous are advised not to proceed beyond this page. If you are not sure whether this applies to you then by all means, read on – if you fail to find any of it funny, then it DOES apply to you. It's your risk.

Zygma regrets that it has to state a disclaimer but, sadly, it's a pretty litigious society these days, so one does the risk analysis and works out one's risk treatment plans (ISO/IEC 27001:2005 §4.2.1 d), e), f), g)).

CONTENTS

1.	Scope & purpose	3
2.	Background to assignment	3
3.	Procurement activity	3
4.	THE TASTING	4
4.1.	Tasting criteria	4
4.2.	Tasting process	4
4.3.	Scoring	5
5.	Conclusion	5
6.	Acknowledgement to Peer Assessor	5
Annex A – Budgetary analysis		6
A.1	Costs	6
A.2	Receipts	6
A.3	Net balance	6
Annex B – Comparative mass analysis		6
Annex C – Press references		7

1. Scope & purpose

This paper reports on the performance and findings of an assessment of meat and pastry products manufactured in the Melton Mowbray region of the British Isles, an area of some 1800 square miles around the town of Melton Mowbray¹ in Leicestershire, central England.

2. Background to assignment

In November 2005 the Zygma partnership LLC was contacted by a respected peer, Ms. Fiona Pattinson, who had a rather strange assignment request.

Having learnt via a posting on the INCITS CS1 list that Zygma's CEO, Richard Wilsher, was heading off to Europe, there possibly to attend an ISO/JTC1/SC27 briefing, Ms. Pattinson requested that on his return to the United States of America, Mr. Wilsher convey to her a 'Melton Mowbray' pie.

It is Zygma's business policy to strive at all times to remain within applicable laws, and certainly import prohibitions on cooked meats seemed likely to threaten a breach of that policy requirement, should the request be accepted. Pointing out this impediment to fulfillment of Ms. Pattinson's needs, Zygma's CEO offered instead to purchase one at Ms. Pattinson's expense and perform himself an assessment as to its quality.

Things came to a head on Sunday November 28th when the sum of \$10 was deposited into an account held in Zygma's favour, for the purchase of aforementioned pie material, and so Zygma accepted the obligation. Well, there wasn't really much choice, having made the suggestion in the first place.

3. Procurement activity

By nothing more than sheer coincidence, it transpired that the name 'Melton Mowbray' was a somewhat hot commodity at this time (unlike the pies bearing the name, which are best eaten cold, not for flavour alone – pork meat does not much like being re-heated). See press reports in Annex C.

The Mowbray region was undergoing a little tantrum, much like the Champagne region of France had done some years before, attempting to trade-mark and restrict usage of the name 'Melton Mowbray', to only those producing pork pies in that region (others presumably to be described as '*méthode Melton Mowbrayeuse*').

Having in mind the extreme delicacy which was besetting the assignment, and performing a quick 'back of fag packet' risk assessment on the fly, Zygma's CEO identified a local town butcher as the most likely locality to procure a genuine Melton Mowbray product. A quick 'phone call to 'Leonard Holt, Butchers'² confirmed not only the availability of the sought-after pies by name, but confirmation that they were indeed the sought-after pies by region. Bull's-(pig's)-eye, first go! Racing across country, four of the individual pork pies were purchased³ from Leonard Holt's butchery.



Leonard Holt's premises, from which the individual Melton Mowbray pies were purchased

¹ The phrase 'painting the town red' originated in Melton when some young aristocrats up for the hunt went on a drunken spree in the 1800s and literally painted Melton town centre red. This could be the single most useful piece of information in this paper. Give serious consideration to quitting while you're ahead!

² Leonard Holt, Butchers, 88 Newland Street, Witham, Essex, UK - CM8 1AH, Tel: +44 1376 51 32 30. The author has been a customer of Holt's for some 28 years.

³ Time of purchase was approximately 2005-12-06, 12h33UTC

It was then that an un-foreseen risk manifested itself, with costly impact - the pies came without packaging or any factual matter pertaining to their constitution (it is a quirk of British food regulations that one can sell raw meat by the pound but packaged meat must be by the kilo. Raw meat can just be bunged on the slab, but packaged has to have a minimum of 2000 words on its constitution and every substance in it listed, down to the penicillin they gave the poor creature ... however, this is becoming an unnecessary diversion). A recovery plan was quickly cobbled together – buy a portion of Sainsbury's⁴ Melton Mowbray pie as a benchmark - all its ingredients, plus a reference taster's opinion, were already published in The Times' report. Just ten minutes extra driving and the corrective action had been executed and the continuity of the assignment guaranteed, barring accidents on the way home.



evangelist, not at all an eccentric, and an appreciator of fine Shiraz.

The criteria were:

- a) Appetizing appearance;
- b) Pastry/jelly/meat ratio;
- c) Texture / composition of: pastry / jelly / meat;
- d) Taste of pastry / jelly / meat;
- e) Aftertaste (before the Shiraz);
- f) Aftertaste (after the Shiraz).

4.2. Tasting process

A conventional approach of fork and knife was adopted after consider numerous alternatives, few of which seemed practical (e.g. the idea of using chop sticks was quickly abandoned) and some just too bad mannered (no need to dwell upon those).

4. THE TASTING

4.1. Tasting criteria

Prior to the tasting, criteria were drawn up so that each taster (there were two) could make their assessment against a common framework.

The tasters were:

Mr. William LIST, proprietor of Wm. List & Co., information security expert, ISMS contributor, past Chairman of the British Computer Society's Security Specialist Group, and a pork pie aficionado.

Mr. Richard G. WILSHER, CEO of the Zygma partnership LLC, also an information security expert, ISMS

No condiments of any nature were permitted for the initial tasting – this was a matter of Pure Pork Pie. Half-way through, each taster was permitted to use any condiments of their choice, selected from:

Salt, pepper, Heinz's Branston pickle, Sharwood's mango chutney, Colman's English mustard, plus a light assortment of salad vegetables.



Here the tasting team assume their duties
(Wilsher to port, List to starboard)

⁴ J. Sainsbury is one of the top two British supermarkets oops, apparently only one of the top three. Oh, now it seems they've slid into fourth place. Could be the inferior quality of their Melton Mowbray products, but let's not pre-empt the tasting.

4.3. Scoring

Each pork pie was considered against each of the criteria, taking into account the reference pie and its 'Times' write-up, which (even though it was The Times) was the subject of a comparative assessment by the tasters.

Each assessed pie-criterion combination (PCC) was ranked 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) by each taster, to which the taster could add a subjective comment. These were recorded, the wine, pickle, and pork pie & pastry spillage scraped off the record sheets, and what results could still be read through the resultant stains were mullered over until the wine took its effect and all care cast aside.

5. Conclusion



Getting close-up and personal with the insides of the pies

After all the excitement of the assignment it can be probably summed-up in one comment:

“Frankly, the Sainsbury’s ham / turkey / herb pie with cranberry topping which I’d bought the previous weekend far outshone either of these pies. The flavour was more intense, and varied, the herbs gave a subtle under-flavour which rose through the stronger taste of the meat like pale white wood smoke, lingering from an overnight fire, rises slowly through the cold morn’ air of the woods. The jelly beneath the crown of cranberries atop this creation had a deep red hue, only to fade into the more customary pale gold as it reached the base of the pastry case, the pastry being firm, crisp and full of golden flavour. That’ll be my meat pie of choice in the future” (said Zygma’s CEO).

Whilst further assignments of this nature may be considered, Zygma management is presently

undertaking a six month in-depth analysis of the economics of the assignment herein reported upon, to see whether the bottom line could somehow be reversed (see Annex A).

Serious enquiries should be submitted to [the Zygma partnership LLC](#) – no time wasters, please.

6. Acknowledgement to Peer Assessor

The willing services and bravery of Mr. William LIST, FBCS CPPT⁵ are to be acknowledged. He unflinchingly attacked both pork pie varieties, ensuring that his taste buds were frequently re-aroused between mouthfuls of pie by a generous quaff of arousing Shiraz. He expounded sagely on the characteristics of each pie variety, judging carefully against all criteria which had hitherto been defined for the purposes of the task. Not one criterion escaped his keen attention. Were that there were more dedicated professionals like him in the world!

⁵ *Certifiable* Pork-Pie Taster

Annex A – Budgetary analysis

All costs incurred in GB£ have been converted to US\$ at a rate of US\$1.72/GB£.

A.1 Costs

Airfare, SNA – LGW (proportion thereof)	(\$3,500.00)
Melton Mowbray individual pies (quantity four, total GB£4.48)	(\$7.71)
‘Reference’ Melton Mowbray pie portion (GB£0.57)	(\$0.98)
Wolf Blass ‘Presidents Selection’ Shiraz 2003, palette arouser (GB£8.99)	(\$15.28)
Miscellaneous dressing (GB£1.00)	(\$1.72)

A.2 Receipts

Assignment fee	\$10.00
----------------	---------

A.3 Net balance

Net balance	(\$3,515.71)
-------------	--------------

That’s a significant loss – whether tax deductible is presently being investigated.

Annex B – Comparative mass analysis

The four Melton Mowbray individual pork pies had the following masses:

#1	0.183 Kg
#2	0.178 Kg
#3	0.177 Kg
#4	0.173 Kg
	(so much for standardization!)

This yields an average individual pork pie mass of:

0.178 Kg

The reference Melton Mowbray pork pie slice had the following mass:

0.116 Kg

Assuming an approximately equivalent density of pie (i.e., $\rho_{\pi MM} \simeq \rho_{\pi Ref}$) this confirms the visual determination (assayed by both tasters) that the reference slice was not as big as any of the individual pies, and in fact was smaller than each of them.

None of this matters.

Annex C – Press references

Whilst dead-heading so as to position optimally for the performance of the assignment (i.e., whilst flying to the UK, where the pies are produced and the only known place at which they are reliably (and edibly) available), the following press items were noted and are presented here for their informative, historical and comparative values. In the event, they turned out to be invaluable and show just how important thorough research and preparation are when undertaking a difficult assignment such as this.

Each is from The Times (London edition), 2005-12-01.

Meaty court battle for piece of the pie

The rural town of Melton Mowbray is fighting to protect its status as the true home of pork pies, reports Valerie Elliott

THE Royal Courts of Justice are an unlikely setting for a pork pie fight.

But the fate of the "Melton Mowbray" pork pie has aroused such regional passions that a senior judge must now declare if it is a distinctive geographical dish or a national recipe. Pork pie makers from Melton Mowbray, in Leicestershire, insist that the pastry is a regional dish and should be made only within the area.



"I thought that our pork pies came from Westminster"

The pies have even won support from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to seek official protection from the European Union, in the same way that Parma ham can come only from Parma or Bayonne ham from Bayonne.

But Northern Foods, a leading manufacturer based in Hull, argues that the pies are a national institution and that they have been made outside Melton Mowbray for more than 100 years. It began judicial review proceedings against De-fra's decision yesterday.

The company produces own-label versions of "Melton Mowbray" for Sainsbury's, Asda and Marks & Spencer and has a 24 per cent share of the £51 million-a-year pork pie market in the UK. The problem is that these pies are produced in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, or Market Drayton, in Shropshire, and in the 19th century were made in Birmingham.

But the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Association believes that authentic pork pies can be made only in an 1,800 square mile area, which includes Mel-

ton Mowbray, Leicester, Nottingham and Northampton.

Northern Foods says that it objects to "the artificial nature of the region proposed". A spokeswoman said: "If the MMPPA succeeds, where will it all end? Will Chelsea buns be allowed only in Chelsea, Yorkshire puddings in Yorkshire or Cornish pasties in Cornwall?" The company argues that the description "Melton Mowbray" refers to a type of pie, a certain quality and a broad recipe, and is not associated with a place of production.

In fact, Northern Foods owns a plant in Nottingham within the proposed designation zone where it could still manufacture the pies. But the company said that it was fighting the principle of the decision, which it believes will limit consumer choice and will affect competition.

Matthew O'Callaghan, chairman of the MMPPA, insists that the distinction is not just about region — even though the pies were first made in the town in the 18th century for huntsmen who wanted a lunch that could withstand the rigours of a cross-country ride.



They were made as a by-product of Stilton cheese with pigs fed on surplus whey. The authentic Melton Mowbray pork pie must also have the correct colour and ingredients, he said.

Mr O'Callaghan is representing large manufacturers, Samworth Brothers and Dickinson & Morris, as well as regional bakers, and insists that they always use fresh instead of cured pork, so that the meat is traditional grey and not pink in colour.

The MMPPA also accuses other manufacturers of failing to use the correct baking process — the authentic pie is baked free-standing to give it a characteristic bow shape, while the imitators use hoops to support the pie in the oven.

He said: "This decision will be a turning point for regional British foods. Either we decide to protect the consumer and rural jobs and decide to preserve our food heritage, or we allow large manufacturers to plunder our regional foods with additives and recipes unrecognisable from the original."

Authentic Melton Mowbray pies should not contain preservatives but should contain at least 30 per cent meat.

The hearing continues today.

Leading article, page 19

AND THE PROOF . . .

A blind tasting among Times staff overwhelmingly favoured the pie as produced by Dickinson and Morris. Various comments about it were "a nice meaty texture", "a wonderful taste" and "delicious and peppery". Sainsbury's own label Melton Mowbray was praised for its pastry but other comments were "tastes like processed ham", "synthetic", "absolutely filthy" and "can't taste any pork".

Dickinson & Morris
Ingredients: Pork (38%), wheat flour, lard, vegetable oil (including hydrogenated vegetable oil), pork bonestock, pork fat, potato starch, salt, pork gelatine, spices, egg

Sainsbury's
Ingredients: wheat, flour, pork (35%), water, lard, pork fat, vegetable oil and hydrogenated vegetable oil (palm and rapeseed), potato starch, salt, rusk (wheat, flour, salt, raising agent, ammonium carbonate), pork gelatine, pepper, egg

Note for non-Brit readers, re cartoon: 'pork pie' is rhyming slang for 'lie'; 'Westminster' is where the UK Parliament is located. Geddit?

LIFE OF PIE

Does Melton Mowbray mean the same as "Melton Mowbray"?

Imagine being a pork pie assembled in, say, Melton Mowbray. Your crust is biscuity. Your fat content is high. Your sides topple inwards as if constructed in the 14th century, or for a *Shrek*-themed children's party. Wherever sold, you fly off the shelves and into confident, grateful stomachs.

Now imagine being an identical pork pie assembled in, say, Leeds. If your packaging says "Melton Mowbray" on it, your fate should be as satisfactory as that of your doppelgänger from Melton Mowbray. If not, you risk the shame of being marked down,

missing your sell-by date, crumbling enough to bare your insides and landing in a skip with the knobbly carrots.

Could anyone wish for such an outcome? Northern Foods, which makes geographically assertive pork pies 90 miles from the Leicestershire town in whose reflected pie prowess they seek to bask, fiercely opposes it. The company is challenging government efforts to grant the Melton Mowbray area the exclusive right to use its name on its pies. If Northern Foods wins, 300 of its jobs will be secured, it says. And presumably Maine lobster will start

thriving in the Scillies and London buses will eventually take Manhattan.

There is another solution: total pie devolution. Let every neighbourhood in the land build and embrace its pie, protected from far-flung pirates. For example, the Chelsea pie, rich, plummy and overpriced, will find its niche among visiting oligarchs. The Primrose Hill pie will become famed for its flaky pastry and chunks of prime bull. And Northern Foods will pioneer its very own Leeds pie — not unlike the "Melton Mowbray" one, but less pretentious and more frank.