

The Christmas Turkey—a very worthy bird indeed!

Patricia Gallogly



WELL, HERE it is again, Christmas, and seventy years later it certainly has changed a lot.

The best thing about Christmas in the good old days was that there was an extra income in many farmers' houses a few weeks before the Christmas—the family could sell the turkeys that they had been fattening up all year for the Christmas market. The birds had been fed on potatoes. That did not cost anything. We had plenty of those.

A country shop a few miles from where we lived used to buy all the turkeys from the farmers' wives, and they paid a good price for them. The shop, in turn, would sell them to the city market where they would be prepared by the city's butcher shops for the big rush of customers buying them for Christmas dinner. In addition, we and most of our neighbours would keep a few turkeys to kill and send to our family members who were living in England. My mother ran the local post office in Lauderdale (outside Ballinamore) and all the people around would be posting turkeys to England. There would be seven or eight turkeys leaving the post office every day for weeks, posted three or four together in a canvas bag. My poor mother had to weigh each turkey and stamp it and register it with red wax. Surely the birds would be gone off by the time they'd have arrived in England?

Anyhow, a turkey could be eleven or twelve pounds in weight, and so heavy, and the mail man who called for the evening post would have to carry those heavy bags out to the van. But the farmers' wives had earned fifty, sixty, seventy and up to a hundred pounds or more in cash for their turkeys. Some people had seventy or eighty turkeys to sell, and it would be the best bit of money to get all year.

All I remember about Christmas day is delicious bottles of YR sauce and HP sauce, a stuffed turkey dinner, and the neighbours calling in to drink Guinness, which my father had stocked a lot of for the occasion. So that is the story of turkeys of long ago. They provided us with a real Christmas bonus, at a time when with the money from the turkeys we could buy new clothes and new shoes as well as toys for the children and Christmas presents for our families and friends. In addition, we had a few turkeys for ourselves to feast on and to give to any of our family or friends who were not farming people. It made for a wonderful Christmas all round, thanks to this humble bird, the turkey, a very worthy bird indeed!

McGOVERN AUGHAVAS LEITRIM GAA CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Leitrim GAA reached an historic milestone in 2019, with the official opening of the county's Centre of Excellence at Annaduff. Many years work had gone into this project, led by various officials, who were all remembered on the day.

Fund-raising was very much central to the culmination of the dream and credit is due to the many Leitrim folk, at home and abroad, who displayed their great love of and pride in the county by their financial support, especially through the novel "Leitrim Wall" concept. As has been the case over many years now, the name McGovern, Aughavas, was again central to financial support of Leitrim GAA. Tony and Bernadette McGovern, with a very generous donation, earned the naming rights for this major new development, now named the McGovern Aughavas Leitrim GAA Centre of Excellence. Uachtaran CLG, John Horan, was on hand to officially open the Centre.



Martin McCartin, Treasurer, Leitrim GAA, Andrew Redican, President Leitrim GAA, Seamus Clarke of JP Clarke's, New York, team sponsor of Leitrim, Attracta O'Reilly, Secretary Leitrim GAA, Enda McGloin, Chairman, Leitrim County Council, John Horan, GAA President, Bernadette McGovern, Tony McGovern, Gerry McGovern, President Connacht Council GAA, Eamonn Duignan, Chairman Leitrim Wall Committee, Terence Boyle, Chairman Leitrim GAA