

A LIVING DERIVED FROM THE FARM IN DRUMINCHIN

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UNTIL the nineteen sixties, humans and animals worked together on the farm to create a living for both. That was in the days when such animals were highly respected and many of them were regarded as part of the family.

We shared horses with a neighboring farmer, that meant our Dolly helped the neighbour's horse to plough and mow and then the neighbour's horse returned to help ours and do the same. Only big farmers could afford to keep their own two horses then.

A horse was kept to do all the farm work and a donkey to do all the smaller jobs especially when Dolly was busy at something else. We kept between eight and nine cows, two heifers for replacement cows, sold if not needed and about six weanlings some of which were sold at the end of the following summer.

There were four sows whose pigs were sold and a pig was killed every year for the house. There were always three or more for pork, with some of them for replacement sows, with others sold. The pig killed for the house would provide boiling bacon, rashers and fresh pork. The fat was rendered for lard for baking and frying. All pet pigs were reared in the kitchen. The cows were taken to local bulls, such as the McGoverns, Loobys, O'Rourkes, and Kilkennys at a set fee.

My grandfather, Thomas Patterson, kept his own bull for service to the neighbors, to make the extra bit of money that was always needed—but that was before my time!

The cows were hand-milked, which my parents churned in a dash churn to provide butter for household use—the remainder of the butter was sold in McManus' shop in Church Street in Carrigallen. We had our own milk and the buttermilk was also sold after enough of it was kept to bake the soda bread. Any-

more after that was fed to the pigs. In grandfather's time, the milk was churned by a machine operated by a donkey—known as a churning machine. In more recent times, the remainder of this machine was dug out and sold for scrap.

Forty to fifty hens were always kept providing eggs for use in the house, two dozen for a private house in the town, with the remainder sold to Frank Hourican, a local fowl buyer and egg dealer. There would be a lot of chickens for spring and six hens would hatch out about 60 chicks per year. These chickens would provide replacement pullets and cockerels for table use, the remainder sold, and the old rooster sold for breeding purposes.

There were 12 ducks and two drakes nearby, always Aylsbury who also provided eggs for the house and the remainder sold for hatching. There would be about a dozen ducklings hatched out each year. They were fattened with some sold for breeding purposes.

There were always four geese and two ganders, some of whose eggs were sold—the others hatched and sold at Christmas. A few might remain for the New Year and then sold on for breeding purposes.

There was always a couple of guinea fowl whose eggs were used in the house. One year, my mother had 30 guinea chicks. They were troublesome to rear but brought in a nice bit of money with Magee the fowl buyer from Ballyconnell who passed our gate every Wednesday. My grandparents kept turkeys, but my mother never did, but again I kept them in my farming days, I kept one turkey hen and sold some of her eggs and hatched out the remainders. They were sold live at Christmas. In later years we bought 20 every year from Caddens Poultry Farm at a month old and sold them oven ready at Christmas. It was difficult to get some-

body to kill and pluck them and a rush to get them all gutted out in time for Christmas—but the income was good...better than cattle. There was always one left for the Christmas Dinner!

In later years, cows were milked and the milk went to the creamery, so there was a cheque at the end of the month! The skim milk came back from the Creamery to feed calves. The creamery was at Longfield. Neighbouring farmers would join together and take turns to bring back the milk there by horse and cart. There were six or seven farmers in the townland of Druminchinn, joined together—that meant that everyone had only one day a week each to go, as it took most of a day to pick up the cans of milk, get there and get back!

At the end of February/early March, my father ploughed a field or two for oats with the horses, and seed oats were bought and sowed and Dolly harrowed it on her own. When harvest came, it was usually cut with the scythe, tied in sheaves and put in stokes—in a week or two it was put in handstacks and at a later stage Dolly brought it to a haggard where it was put in reeks till the treater came. All of the neighbors came and helped with the treating. They all went from house to house, including my father, while the treater was in the locality. The oats were then used to feed Dolly and the hen. More of it went to Greene's mill in Drumcannon to be made into oatmeal for porridge and scones in the house as well as feeding young chicks. The remainder of the oats went to a Hammer mill in the town, either Doonans or Parrs, where it was crushed to feed cattle and dry sows. Some years we had a small crop of rye which was grown in a similar way to oats and when treated, was used to feed the cattle.

After St Patrick's day, half of the garden was set with potatoes and the mare cut the lea and drew out the manure with the cart. The potatoes were cut into splits and the cutlins were fed to the fowl and pigs. The splits were then dropped and the holes closed. A few weeks later the furrows were ploughed—that was a one-horse job. Then the potatoes were shoveled by hand. In the summer they were sprayed with a mixture of bluestone and washing soda dissolved in water and applied with a knapsack sprayer. In October they were dug and the big ones were picked out and put in a heap and covered with rushes and earth until wanted. The little ones were picked for the fowl and the pigs. At the end of March or the beginning of April, they were picked out of the heap and brought into the house—some were kept for seed, the rest for food and some for feed for pigs and poultry. The field that they were grown in would be later ploughed for oats and the following year would have a crop of hay. There were four or five meadows kept for hay. A lot of farmyard manure went on these. They were mowed by horses—our own and Murrays, starting around 25th June. Two days after mowing it would be shook up by fork and horsedrawn—then rowed into rows with mare and wheel-rake. In wet weather, it was mowed by hand. Then it might have to be lapped and later built into handshakings and when the good day came, it would be built into cocks. If the weather was good, it went straight into cocks from the rows gathers in by hand with the fork—some years later with the mare and hay tumbler, known in this part of the country as a 'tumbling Paddy'.

The cocks were then tied with hand-made hay-ropes. These were usually made on a wet day before being twisted with a hand-twistrer hay containing a lot of sprat which made the best ropes. A few weeks later, Dolly would draw the cocks into the hayseed with the hayshifter and it was built into the shed by hand. When the shed was full, the extra hay

was put into reeks and pikes in the haggard, so we had our own fodder for the stock.

In May, we went to the bog and cut the turf with a turf spade. The turf was then wheeled out on the bank with a turf barrow. A couple of weeks later they were spread on the bank and after another two weeks they were put in 'windrows' and afterwards into clamps. In wet weather they would have to be footed first. The mare drew them home to the turf shed in turf crates at the end of the summer. When the shed was full, the remainder was carried out of the bog to the pass, put in a link and thatched with rushes until drawn home in spring. Rough-heads were cut in the old bog and won for the fire. Timber was cut also on the farm either by handsaw or crosscut, so we always had our own fuel.

Rushes were cut and won on the farm and put in the haggard so we had our own bedding for livestock.

In the garden, we had peas, beans, carrots, parsnips, turnips, beetroot, rhubarb, parsley, onions and sometimes lettuce. Cabbage was set in February/March and up to May, so we would have cabbage nearly the whole year round—and we had 'ragging jack' for Winter cabbage. Nettles were sometimes used to replace cabbage.

In the orchards, we had apple trees, 'Cabbage stock', 'Lady Fingers' for eating and 'Bramleys' for cooking. They could be picked and stored till the following Spring. We also had plums, gooseberries, blackcurrants, raspberries, strawberries, and vegetable marrows. So, we had all of our own vegetables and fruit. We also had our own jam which was for sale as were the fruits mentioned above. As a child, I picked blackberries for sale as did most children then. We also grew cabbage for feeding cattle and sows.

When we lived in the old thatched farmhouse, we had our own straw for thatching. We had sallies growing in the garden for scallops for the thatch.

The thresher came round twice a year,

Autum and Spring, to thresh the oats and perhaps rye. In my childhood days it was powered by a diesel engine separate from the thresher. Two local horses pulled the thresher from house to house and another horse or two donkeys pulled the engine. If it was a hard pull, up a hill or on soft ground for instance, the men would have to help the horses. All the neighbors dogs came as well as the men. I knew there were usually rats in the stacks.

It usually took half a day at each house, so you had to provide dinner or tea for all. In my mother's day we would usually do bacon, cabbage and potatoes with desert of either custard and rhubarb or custard and apples, followed by tea and currant bread. If we had them for tea it would be usually boiled bacon and you always had to have plenty of red jam in every house for tea.

In later years, the thresher was drawn and powered by the tractor. When it left the haggard, there were bags of oats, fresh straw and a bag of oat dust for the hens and plenty of chaff for them to pick on.

The men who threshed in the locality were: Henry Woods, Pee Mollohan, Alec Richardson, Harry Storey, Eddie Heslin & Bob Hyland.

A dog was kept for working—they helped with poultry and pigs and also worked as a watchdog.

Cats were kept to kill mice and rats and along with the dog, were children's playmates, as there were very few toys those days. Bread was all baked at home as were boxty, potato bread and pancakes. All children's clothes were made at home and knitwear was knitted at home.

All this has changed now. It was all a lot of very hard work and very little time off. That's the way we lived in Druminchin, same as all the farms in that townland and a lot of the neighbouring townlands, a lot of them now planted in forests of timber.