


TOMMY THE DROVER

Hubert McMorrow writes about Tommy McEnroy

T J McENROY was born in 1896, the oldest son of Thomas McEnroy who was a native of Roslea, Co Fermanagh and Kate Fowley, Newtownmanor, Co Leitrim. He was known as Tommy the Drover, and he lived in a cottage on Station Road in Manorhamilton.

From a very early age Tommy attended fairs in Manorhamilton and helped to drive cattle to the railway station. Later on, this became his full time job, he drove cattle all over Ireland, the numbers would vary but often as many as 50 or 60 and sometimes more. This was a highly skilled job at which Tommy would have served his time from a very early age. We know that people from Manorhamilton area drove cattle from as far away as Puck Fair in Co Kerry. One of Tommy's fellow drovers was a man by the name of James McGullion from Kiltyclogher. These two men walked many a long mile together and told many interesting stories of their travels and of the people they met.

This was not an easy way of life, the drover was expected to be out in all weathers, there was no en-suite hotels, one got his head down in a shed some where on his travels while his herd grazed and rested. All moved on at first light or before. In the mid 50's this method of moving cattle was phased out with the introduction of cattle lorries. However Tommy could still be seen walking around the fair greens with his ash plant willing and ready to take to the road.



A DROVER

To Meath of the pastures,
From wet hills of the sea,
Through Leitrim and Longford,
Go my cattle and me.

I hear in the darkness
Their slipping and breathing—
I name them the by-ways
They're to pass without keeping;

Then the wet, winding roads,
Brown bogs with black waters,
And my thoughts on white ships
And the King o' Spain's daughter

O farmer, strong farmer!
You can spend at the fair,
But your face you must turn
To your crops and your care.

And soldiers, red soldiers!
You've seen many lands;
But you walk two by two,
And by captains' commands!

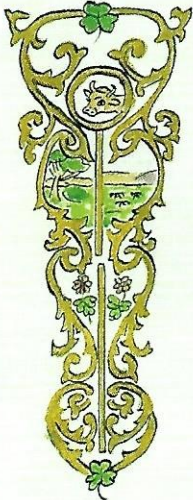
O the smell of the beasts
The wet wind in the morn,
And the proud and hard earth
Never broken for corn!

And the crowds at the fair,
The hinds loosened and blind,
Loud words and dark faces,
And the wild blood behind!

(O strong men with your best
I would strive breast to breast,
I could quiet your hinds
With my words, with my words!)

I will bring you, my kine,
Where there's grass to the knee,
But you'll think of scart croppings
Harsh with salt of the sea.

by Padraig Colum



The sight of these hardworking men known as drovers with their coats folded across their shoulders as if they had been glued there, ash plant in hand will never be seen again, nor will the loud call to their herd and the mooing response as if they understood each other be heard. Tommy died away on the 8th of June 1966 at the age of 71. Tommy left behind his friend and brother who was always at home with the

kettle boiled and fresh vegetables from his garden cooked and ready for Tommy on his return from his travels. Pat died away in 1976.

This photograph and copy of *The Drover* by Padraig Colum was created by the late Mrs O'Carroll, Manorhamilton.