

**Milk; But Not of Human Kindness:**

**My Recollections of St. Pierre:**

**and**

**Some Poems I have Written**

**By**

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**Milk; But Not of Human Kindness:**

Yet again on this a cool wet June day the mind wanders back along the path of life, although I am pleased to say or write that I was able to help out with the morning milking earlier today but now the rain has driven me indoors. As I have spent more hours of my waking hours milking cows than I have on any other activity I thought I would record how the methods of milking cows has changed over the past seventy years. Before I get involved in the details the following thoughts come to mind.

Milk like so many other aspects of modern life is taken very much for granted, but from the mouse to the elephant as food for the young, the supply of the mothers milk can mean the difference between life and death. Although television is a remarkable invention in our modern age, like so many other aspects of life it can be very much abused. The other evening a wildlife programme about elephants was showing how the baby elephant was suckling from the mother with its trunk. Now having watched many of our domestic animals perform this task, I thought it quite remarkable the way the elephant is designed and how else other than by using its trunk could the young elephant get this essential nutrient from its mother.

Milk to the young of animals is life itself, all shepherds will tell you and I know full well that a new born lamb is very vulnerable to the cold, but once it finds the mothers milk this nourishment works like magic, and they thrive and gambol about in all winds and weathers. Even we humans, even the greatest athletes or the strongest men as babies relied on their mothers milk at this critical period of their life. There is no doubt that nature or our creator has provided all the different species with their own specially designed milk and the methods of obtaining it in all its forms.

In the human race as with animals the female has been given the ability to produce milk. Unfortunately as in much connected to the human race the fashion designers have made much of this part of the anatomy of the female, other than the purpose for which it was intended. Although as a mere male, and an old one at that, these attributes as they are often displayed today are very pleasing to the eye. There is no doubt that we must all agree that left to nature all forms of life on this planet that depend on milk in its infant life, the means of extraction and its composition has been very well designed.

The older I get the more I realise that when a commodity is in plentiful supply, it is treated with wasteful disregard. Take water and electricity two great gifts for mankind and

yet so many people only value it when it is not available. The reader may well ask what this has to do with milk and I hope to be able to clarify this a little later on. However, just now milk is coming into this same category in that it is in surplus. Having agreed that milk in all its forms is a remarkable product, whether the being that produces it be it human or animal, the milk that is produced is perfectly designed for the infant of whatever specific species of animal or humans that will benefit from it. It is produced quite naturally, it is not formulated in a laboratory and made in a factory, its consistency is constant and it is perfectly balanced for the purpose that it is intended for produced from natural raw materials eaten quite naturally; so we should all agree that milk is a remarkable product.

There are some things in nature that I do not understand, why is it that a cow has four teats yet normally she only has one calf, a sheep however has only two teats yet it is not unusual for a ewe to have three lambs. Pigs are easier to understand with litters of ten or twelve the sow has up to fourteen teats. The horse family has two teats yet for some reason each teat has two holes.

In most situations in life there are advantages and disadvantages, getting old is the particular part that I am thinking about, to be able to remember how we produced milk on the farm seventy years ago and on the other hand not being able to remember an old friends name. (So in case it may be of interest perhaps one day I will try and write the history of milk during this time). I have actually been milking cows for seventy years.

The one drawback to people of my ilk is that there is a danger that I will write something similar to my previous writings, anyway that is a risk that I will have to take.

Let us start in the year 1930 when my father was a tenant farmer with fifty two acres of land and he produced milk for sale. In those days if your farm was in or near the village, people would come to the farm to buy milk by the jug-full. Then there were those farmers who took their milk by horse and light cart with churns of milk to the nearest small town and the public would bring their jugs etc to be filled with milk sold by the measure-full. Then there were town dairies where the cows were actually kept and milked in the town. Then there were other town dairies and it was these dairies that my father and other farmers supplied with milk carried by rail in milk churns on a special milk trains. This meant a daily trip with the horse and light cart to the nearest railway station, in our case this was Portskewett about a four mile journey each way.

At that time we had a young lad, a town boy from Cardiff who had come to work for my father, he lived in with us as one of the family and his pay was five shillings per week, (25p in today's money), one of his jobs was to help to milk the cows by hand. Milking cows by hand was not so much a craft as getting the arm and hand muscles toned up for the job. There is a special valve I think it is called the sphincter valve on the end of each teat through which the milk has to be squeezed. The most important part of hand milking was that the person milking must have a liking for cows to enable the cow to relax and allow her milk to be let down. When the cow is treated with a degree of kindness, the udder is gently washed with warm water and massaged, this as it resembles the sucking by the calf stimulates the let down of the milk. This let down occurs more readily when the cow is freshly calved and the udder is full of milk, also although this is debated in some quarters the feeding of some concentrated feed at this time also stimulates the release of hormones that control the let down of the milk, these hormones could also help the opening of the sphincter valve in the teat referred to earlier. When the milk is properly let down, the valve is relaxed then hand milking is quite pleasant if not it is very hard unrewarding work.

Then of course even though the cows are treated with kindness some like some humans have bad tempers and this can result when sitting under a cow milking her to suddenly be despatched into the gutter by a swift kick from the cow, I and others have on many occasions experienced this, ending up on the floor with the stool, the bucket and often the milk has been lost, this loss of milk would often be of more concern to the farmer than any possible injury that the milker might have sustained. On a hot summer afternoon between four and six o'clock being the usual milking time, milking is quite hot work. In the winter hand milking is not the worst of jobs, you would be sat down sharing the warmth of the cows, although the most unpleasant part was due to the fact that you were not moving about and the feet would get very cold from the cold wet floor, and I used to suffer terrible chilblains that would be broken and they would be very painful.

The average hand milker would be able to milk six or seven cows per hour depending on the quantity of milk each cow was giving and the resistance given by the sphincter valve. Having spent the last seventy years getting milk from cows I have indeed seen many changes. One of the drawbacks of getting old is that the memory gets very odd, now I can remember how I started to milk when I was eight years old, the town boy I have mentioned earlier would be sat down milking and I would ask him to let me try and very soon I would have my own

bucket and stool and one of the first cows that I milked was a little red Shorthorn called “Tiny”. As I wrote earlier memory does play tricks on the elderly and I feel sure I have written about the milking competitions that I took part in. These were very good in encouraging cleanliness, and this is something that I have always tried to practice, there was and I fear there still is in some quarters the attitude,” that which will not fatten will fill”.

These competitions were organised by Monmouthshire County Council (M.C.C.) who were responsible for running the Agricultural College at Usk and attached to this college was a dairy section and I do have a good knowledge of this having been a student there in 1940. There was a herd of dairy Shorthorns kept there and the milk was brought to the college dairy where we students were taught the art of butter and cheese making. There were two lecturers/instructors, a Miss Trippe and Miss Craig and if you were interested in entering the milking competitions, then on receiving your application one of these ladies would come to the farm and give free instruction on the art of producing clean milk.

Going back to hand milking in the summer most of the time the cows would come into the cowshed with their teats and udders clean and they would not need to be washed, and on most farms in those days it was not usual to wash their udders, but it stands to reason that an open bucket was vulnerable to dust etc which could contaminate the milk. There did come onto the market a special milk bucket called a dome pail it was constructed from one piece of metal it was partly covered and had a built in handle and it did help to prevent debris getting into the milk, but it was more difficult to direct the milk into the bucket without wasting any.

Once the milk is obtained from the cows the most important job is to get it cooled, although I do remember at one period as a young lad that my father had difficulty in selling his milk so he started to supply a dairy shop in Chepstow with cream; to produce cream you put the warm milk to stand and then when the cream had risen to the top as it always does it would be skimmed off using a special cream skimmer. Later we became quite modern in that we had a machine, a separator, this machine was turned by hand and it did work very well, it was the “Diablo”, model and it was a nightmare to wash after it had been used. The milk had to be warm, straight from the cow which was poured in at the top, the handle was turned and it had two spouts, the cream coming out of one and the skim milk out of the other. The cream was put into cans which held about a gallon and these were taken to the main road where they would be put on the service bus with the passengers, the fare was paid to convey this cream

and any money that happened to be in my child's money box was used to pay the fare. This method of selling milk did not last very long.

As I was writing earlier it was very important to cool the milk and a well or deep stream was used when available where the buckets or churns could be placed in the cool water. If this was not possible then there was a specially made cooler with a corrugated surface; the mains water would pass through the space between these corrugated surfaces which were about thirty inches wide and forty five inches deep, the bottom being about forty eight inches from the ground, above the cooler was a holding tank with a capacity of about eight gallons, there was an outlet tap on this tank and when this tap was opened the milk ran down over the front and back corrugated surfaces where it was cooled by the water flowing through the inside. The cooled milk would flow into a trough at the bottom which sloped to a central outlet from where the cooled milk flowed into a churn placed beneath the outlet, this equipment worked quite well. As the milk ran into the churn there were various methods of straining the milk to remove any impurities, the simplest was a piece of muslin tied over the top of the churn, there were also special holders with a two perforated plates, between these two plates were fitted proprietary filter pads, these were of a type of cotton wool and were disposable.

Equipment in milk production is a matter of cause and effect, if a need arises for a piece of equipment or accessory, someone will aim to supply the required items if there is a financial reward to be obtained from doing so. I can imagine way back in history, and it is a fact that we were all more or less country people at one time, and any surplus milk that man obtained was turned into butter or cheese for the household, the art of doing this would have been developed over time. Then industry came and houses were built to form towns and cities and this gave rise to a demand for fresh milk and all its associated products. The milkman came into being doing his daily rounds, the milk being supplied initially by the producer retailers; then as the demand grew town dairies came into being, these were either dairies with their own cows their food being brought to the towns for them, or dairies that bought milk from the farmers and sold it to the people living in the towns and cities.

For the benefit of history I will describe milk production in the 1930's. There were not many farms that were just dairy farms, most were mixed farms with a dairy enterprise the herd would vary from six to forty cows on one farm, and the average would be fifteen to twenty cows. On an all grass farm the fields would be of permanent pasture, the grasses

would be composed of naturally evolved species with a mixture of herbs etc., providing a balanced feed, the herbs would supply vitamins and trace elements and this was a healthy method of milk production. In the summer the cows would graze the unfertilised fields free range with a little supplementary feed at milking time. In the winter the basic feed was hay that would have been stored either in a barn or in a rick in the farmyard. It was a daily job to cut the hay out of the barn or the rick which although put into the barn or the rick loose would, after a few months have compressed down into a quite solid mass. This hay had to be cut into slabs to be handled using a hay knife; a hay knife had a handle across the top connected to the blade by a cranked shaft, the blade would have been about thirty inches deep and about twenty four inches across, one edge would be straight and the other was slightly curved, it was essential to keep it sharp, if it was at all blunt then cutting would be very hard work. The slabs when cut were carried by pitchfork to a store shed or meal house ready to be fed to the cows in the cowshed usually after the morning and evening milking. The cows were tied by a metal chain in their stalls; the stalls were raised about four inches above the dung channel at the rear of the stalls. The cows would be milked in these stalls summer and winter, and they would also be housed in these stalls during the winter nights, but unless the weather was very bad they would go out to a nearby dry field during the day.

This system was very labour intensive, the cows were each bedded individually, feed was placed in the manger in front of each cow and also in the early days water would be carried in buckets which would be placed in the manger in front of each cow, but towards the end of the 1930's the more progressive farmers installed mains fed automatic water bowls that had become available and there would be one available to each cow. The other daily chore was the removal of the dung by fork and shovel often taken to the dung heap where it would be piled by hand for storage until it was spread on the fields in the spring.

Then there was the method of feeding, on the all grass farm as I wrote earlier hay was the basic maintenance feed in the winter and the best hay was always kept for the best milking cows, the poorer hay was fed to the dry cows, the store cattle and the bull. Then there would be feed for the production of milk this would either be based on home-grown cereals balanced with purchased protein foods or a proprietary cake. At one stage in the days of surplus milk, butter and cheese would be made on the farm for use by the members of the household. Generally speaking at this time cows calved in the spring and were dry during the winter. Then as the cities grew the demand increased for a supply of milk all the year round.

Also at this time Oil Mills were established, these mills would crush various products such as groundnut to extract the oil to be used in the manufacture of margarine again to supply the needs of the urban population. One such company was B.O.C.M., (British Oil and Cake Mills) these firms used the residues which resulted from this oil extraction as the basis for concentrated animal feeds such as dairy cake. This did grow into a very large industry and still exists today (2000), although B.O.C.M. has been amalgamated with Pauls animal feeds.

Before the days of cattle cake the grass farmer would use crushed oats mixed with a few beans. Some farmers who kept cows also had some ploughed or arable land and they would grow crops like kale and mangolds for the cows to eat and I would say that mangolds were beneficial to cows that were housed and fed on dry feeds during the winter months. There was always much competition between the manufacturers of the cattle cake and we used to get salesmen calling at the farm to try and obtain business. As a lad I remember a Mr. Farley used to call at the farm, he sold feed for Lever Brothers of Port Sunlight. They did not only sell cattle feed but they had feed for all types of farm livestock, these feeds were packed in hessian sacks of various sizes but they usually held one or one and a quarter hundredweight, that would be equivalent to fifty or sixty two and a half kilograms.

Besides the feed companies who had their own brands of complete balanced rations there were local merchants who were in business long before the Oil and Cake Mills came into being. These local merchants bought and sold cereals such as oats, wheat and barley which they would process in their own mills. Howards of Newport and also Newcombe Bros of Newport and, local to our farm we had Chepstow Farmers, a cooperative organisation the main owners of Chepstow Farmers were local farmers. Chepstow Farmers stocked a wide range of products for animal feed including, flaked maize, this was very much like corn flakes, it was indeed cooked maize that had been rolled to flatten it to enable the livestock to digest it and to obtain the full benefit of the nutrients it contained and it was a good food for cattle, sheep and pigs and as a lad I have eaten it myself.

As I wrote earlier when there is the opportunity to make money mankind will take up the challenge to satisfy the needs of any market. In those days there was no such thing as bulk feed, all products were sold packed in hessian bags and as these were re-usable people set up in business as sack merchants. These merchants would go from farm to farm buying up the empty sacks, they would sort the sacks into different categories and pay an appropriate rate depending on the size and quality but always making sure that they could sell them to the



various outlets at a price which gave them a satisfactory reward for their efforts. These sacks were always paid for in cash and this was always welcome on the farm. The sack man I remember best was Bert Elliott from Cardiff, he would arrive in his large Dodge van, he was a large jolly man, he came to the farm one day and got talking to my father saying that he had some land at Machen and after some discussion father agreed to rent this land from Mr. Elliott, I am sure I have written the details of this in another booklet, "Encounters with Father", so I will not repeat the details but simply to say how ridiculous it was to try and farm this land so far away, and from personal experience I have good reason to remember it.

In producing milk up until the mid 1930's the size of the herd was often governed by the number of people who were available to sit under the cows and hand milk them, also the amount of land and the availability of winter housing also had their influence. The milk in those days was organic, there were no chemicals or antibiotics or such like items, and much is read in these present times about "Organic" products. The feed was grass from fields that would not have been treated with any chemical fertilizers and the winter feed would be grown naturally, the inputs would be hand labour, horse power and farm-yard manure. The item that has puzzled me is that hand milking is not natural but the action of the machine milking does imitate the action of the calf suckling its mother. Yet when we milked by hand mastitis was hardly ever seen and this was fortunate as there were no tubes of antibiotic cream to insert into the udder via the teat and neither were their tubes of medication to be inserted similarly when the cows were dry.

Although producing milk was not trouble free, if a cow had milk fever the cure was to pump the udder full of air through a tube passed through the teat this was to stop her producing any milk, lameness was not often a problem. What was a problem in those days for those who did not have a retail milk round and this was to find a reliable buyer for the milk, when supplying a town milkman or a town dairy there could be problems, having supplied the milk it was often necessary to go to the town to see the person who had received the milk to get payment and this was often quite difficult, it was not easy to find the milkman or the town dairy man at home. Also if they had too much milk they would send the milk back saying that it was sour, another trick was to say that when your milk arrived it was so many gallons short, we used to tie labels onto each churn stating the amount each churn contained, but once the milk had left the farm their word was law. We used to supply a dairy in Cardiff, run and owned by Albert Gage and here again we have mankind taking the

opportunity to make money, as I have written earlier there were special milk trains that took the milk in churns from the local stations where it had been taken by farmers and took it to the city stations where it was forwarded to or collected by the dairymen.

Then as the motor lorry became a means of moving goods milk hauliers came into being, at first they kept to the main roads and the farmers would have to take their milk to the main road where these hauliers would collect it and at the same time they would leave empty churns ready for the next lot of milk. From Green Meadow at first we took our churns to Hayes Gate, but later they were collected from Crick. In the early days the farmer or producer had to supply his own churns and for some reason these churns held seventeen gallons (76 Litres). The principle milk hauliers in our area were Mr. Jackson and Nuesel Counsell. One of the most demanding aspects of the job was that it entailed a lot humping and heavy manual work.

One of the most dramatic changes out of many in the 1930's was the formation of the M.M.B. (Milk Marketing Board) through which all milk was sold, there was a small levy paid for this service but one of the great advantages was that on about the twenty third of each month the M.M.B. would pay money into each producers bank account to the value of the milk supplied the previous month and this was done without fail. The M.M.B. also set up the National Milk Records scheme (N.M.R.) which enabled the producers to have an official record of how their cows were performing in terms of both quantity and quality of the milk produced by each cow and this was a useful aid to selectively breeding from the best cows to get improved milk yields and to improve the quality of the milk. These milk records could also be used when selling surplus cows to prove the performance of the animals.

The M.M.B. were also pioneers of A.I. (Artificial Insemination) this gave farmers the opportunity to improve their herds by having their cows inseminated with semen from good quality bulls and removed the need for each farmer to keep his own bull.

Around this time the Health Authorities were getting concerned about the health aspects of the nations milk supply especially with regard to T.B. A cow with a T.B. infection in her udder could pass this infection on to humans through her milk. As a result the T.T. (Tuberculin Tested) scheme was born, and when all the cows in a herd had passed the T.B. test then the producer received an extra one penny per gallon for his milk. In the early days this test involve one intradermal injection in the neck at which time the thickness of the skin was measured and a few days later a second reading of this skin measurement was taken, if

there was a swelling this indicated that that cow had an infection of T.B. In our case we had several reactors and this was found to be caused by the fact that we had poultry on the farm and they had passed on avian T.B. to the cows but this avian strain of T.B. was not a threat to human health. The result was that as this was a problem on many farms each cow was given a double intradermal injection test, one for bovine T.B. and one for avian T.B. and by comparing results the problem was solved.

Around about the same time possibly earlier in 1937 the Accredited Milk Scheme came into being and this made it necessary for changes to be made at Green Meadow. As I have written earlier at Green Meadow we had a cowshed where we could tie up six cows and attached to the house was a dairy with a stone slab shelf, (now in 2000 it is a modern kitchen). When my father started producing milk to sell as such the milk cooler I have described was hung on the outside wall of the house by the back door, and the water for the cooler was brought from the only tap we had in the house via the window and this arrangement was not acceptable.

Today is October 9<sup>th</sup>. 2000 it is very wet and having been down to the farm to help with the morning milking, I am now confined to my study to write, the milking is now done in a modern parlour but it is hard to imagine how the process has changed over the last seventy years, and that is one reason for my attempt to write this account, I am able to do because "I was there" as they say.

With the Accredited Milk Scheme came regulations and rules regarding all aspects of milk production. To comply with these rules a lean-to shed was built at Green Meadow, it was a very basic building (now used as a tool shed) it was made out of mainly galvanised iron sheets it was in two sections one for the cooling and storage of the milk and the other section was a boiler house. A special boiler on the same principle as used to generate steam in a locomotive was housed in the boiler house and this produced steam which was piped to a steam chest in the dairy part to sterilize the milking utensils. Not only was the building where the milk was cooled brought up to standard but also the housing of the cows was improved in that the length of the stall and the depth of the dung channel had to be of certain dimensions and it was at that time that the small concrete yard was laid at Green Meadow. This concrete was all mixed by hand and at that time the landlords, M.C.C. had an estate yard at Crick, there was a foreman and about ten workmen all skilled in various aspects of farm maintenance.

About this time there was a milkman, Mr. Mews who to get this accredited milk used to drive a van from Newport to Gaer Hill Farm at St. Arvans everyday. By some means he got to know that we were producing accredited milk at Green Meadow so he started to come to us for his supplies. He got into financial problems and owed for milk so his business failed. My father went down to his dairy and was paid in kind and we had thousands of milk bottle caps, and Mr. Bill Nutley from Caldicot used to send a lad on a bicycle fetch some of them during the war.

In a word the production of milk from a health point of view was improving. Then as always man was turning to improvements and the use of milking machines was increasing and as stated earlier the action of the milking machine is closer to the natural sucking of a calf than was hand milking, this is in part due to the vacuum used. The early system was a small petrol driven engine, the most popular was the Lister 1½ hp, it was economical and reliable, easy to start and in their heyday there would have been hundreds of them chugging away around the farms everywhere and not only for driving milking machines. When used for milking machines they drove a vacuum pump, the system was very simple with a pipeline carrying a vacuum over the heads of the cows in the cowshed with a stall tap for every two cows. The milking bucket had four teat cups to be attached to the cow's teats, a pulsator to turn the vacuum into a pulsing action would be connected to the tap in the vacuum pipeline by a rubber tube. The vacuum tap would be opened, the clusters attached to the cows teat and the milk would flow into the bucket, and I well remember our first milking machine.

In passing I would say that my father was an economist perhaps through necessity, going back to the steam boiler, it was possible to buy a boiler specially designed for use on a dairy farm, but father went to Cashmores in Newport and bought a large second hand boiler fired by gas, it had eighteen inch long tubes to convey the heat to the boiler, but father decided to fire this boiler with wood or coal and the result was that these tubes would be clogged with soot and I have spent many hours cleaning these tubes, a really miserable job.

Back to the milking machine, father saw an advertisement in the "Farmer and Stockbreeder", before the days of the "Farmers Weekly" offering a milking machine for sale at Shepton Mallet in Somerset. So off we went crossing on the old Beachley to Aust Ferry to see it, it was still installed on the farm and father bought it together with the Lister engine and the farmer selling it agreed to dismantle it and bring it to meet father at a dog racing track near Bristol. My memory has let me down over the name of this dog track, a disadvantage of

old age. The make of the machine was “Manus” which was later taken over by Fullwood and Bland. We installed it at Green Meadow and got it working, I can not remember just which year this was but probably in the mid 1940’s.

It never fails to amaze me how we humans can remember exact details of a happening or a piece of equipment from many years ago, the following occurred sixty years ago. This Manus milking machine had a little glass bowl on the bottom of each teat cup and as a student at Usk College I had to assemble Alfa Laval teat cups which meant inserting a metal ring inside each rubber liner which had to be exactly placed to fit the cow’s teats. They were telescopic and needed the use of several gadgets to assemble each teat cup, it was a difficult job and as a student I vowed that if ever I went farming on my own account I would never buy an Alfa Laval machine and I never did but in fairness I must say that they were a good firm and they did modernise the teat cups.

So the process of actually getting the milk from the cows udder twice every day has dramatically changed from the bucket and stool days where one man would milk about six cows in an hour, where now in our own parlour depending on the time of the year and the weather fifty cows can comfortably milked per hour and this is probably slow compared to some very large units in existence now in 2000.

The point with milking that has always concerned me is cleanliness, at one time, and sometimes the attitude continues to exist and that is the idea of “that which will not fatten will fill). Some people are not too worried about sediment in the milk as long as it is filtered out; I maintain that it should not be in the milk in the first place. This morning (20/10/2000) just for interest in the future we have had 50mm of rain in three days on already very wet land, now David’s cows have the option of lying in the cubicles or going out into the field, many still lie outside and as a result some of the udders at milking this morning were really dirty, fortunately there is a good supply of warm water at each milking point but the mistake that can be made that in these conditions the udders are not left long enough to let the water drip off for those vital few minutes and soiled water can settle on the rim of the teat cups and with the vacuum can get sucked into the milk. I feel that in some instances one person is expected to milk too many cows and then standards can slip. Of course we are now in the age of the robot, now I have worked with cows all my life and cows do respond to kindness and to the sound of a soothing voice and when it comes to washing a dirty udder especially if it is cow dung that has dried on the udder, for a Robot I would say that that is an impossible task.

There is no doubt that many repetitive jobs in the process of dairy farming can be done mechanically but I feel sure that there will always be a place for the stockman with a pair of seeing eyes. It made me smile the other day when the idea that the cowman milking wore an electric transponder to warn him when he came to milk a cow that had been treated with antibiotics when all that is needed is a red tape on her tail. My motto in life is to keep things simple, the fewer gadgets the better there is then less to be maintained and also less to go wrong. We used to have a bucket of water and an udder cloth for washing the udders now we have piped water between each pair of stalls and paper towels. We used to use sacks of cow nuts and a scoop to measure them for each cow, now we have cake in bulk blown into a hopper and by turning the dial and pressing the button the cake is automatically dispensed in the right amount for each cow.

In most walks of life mankind is a greedy being who never seems to be satisfied. A herd of sixty cows tended by one man with an occasional day off and relief for an annual holiday would seem to me to be a sensible size, and a herd of this size has many advantages at certain times of the year. Now with herds of three hundred cows, and in the United States that would be regarded as small, this desire for big applies to all sections of farming and it is the result of the modern idiom of the economics of scale, which even I have to admit to as being necessary today for economic reasons. This does not only apply to farming, when man first took to the air it was as a solo pilot, which in terms of Christianity if God had intended us to fly he would have given us wings, now we have these giant aircraft and to a simple countryman to devise a machine that will lift all that weight off the ground and to propel it for thousands of miles is remarkable but also greedy. Similarly when modest four wheel lorries replaced the horse for conveying goods now that was progress but now we have these enormous lorries.

I have drifted from the subject so let us get back to milk production, and there is no doubt that in some aspects of the business there have been improvements. At one time dairy farmers who supplied milk to the wholesale market sent their milk in steel churns and at one time the farmer had to supply his own churns, then the dairies started to supply the churns of a standard size, and as I wrote earlier if your farm was not on a main road the churns had to be taken to a milk stand on the main road where on a hot day they would stand in these metal churns in the sun and also in the sun on the lorry and the temperature of the milk would rise with the risk of the milk going sour before it reached the dairy. Things are much better now;

the milk is kept in refrigerated bulk tanks on the farm until it is collected by a tanker lorry which gets the milk to the dairy much quicker.

So to sum up the aspect of milk production of actually getting the milk from the cow, if the milking person is of a high class, milk today should be of very good quality both nutritionally and from a hygiene point of view. The only weak link in the chain is the fact that milk from many producers is mixed together in one tanker and it only needs one slip shod producer to spoil the milk from the other producers. I have to the best of my ability and knowledge covered part of the story of milk production.

Now in October 2000 what of the future, these days more so than ever we have these clever economists and they predict that unless you have a herd of at least one hundred cows you will not survive financially so there we have that view now but what will the opinion be in ten years time; I just can not begin to image the possibilities. The first point that bothers me about modern day milk production is the cleanliness of the systems and therefore of the end product, perhaps I am a fanatic but having watched others milking cows and having spent nearly seventy years at the job it is so easy for unseen contamination to get into the milk, it can be produced clean from healthy cows but it does need intelligence and a will on the part of the operator to do the job properly.

At certain times of the year, especially in summertime a lot of cows udders and teats hardly need washing, but even then some cows like some people like being dirty, and a fault with a lot of people when they are washing dirty udders is that the cows are not left long enough for the water to drip off their udders, just a matter of minutes is all that is required, my apologies if I am repeating myself. It is just a simple matter of getting into the right routine of washing so many cows and then going back to the first one washed which will have drip dried and can then be finished off with a paper towel. If the udder is still wet when the cluster is put on the teats then this dirty water can settle on the rim of the teat cup and then can be sucked by the vacuum into the milk. One thing that is often forgotten is that milking has to be done twice every day, in some cases three times and this has to be done seven days each week and there is no let up unless relief has been arranged.

It may be of interest to the reader to hear how the breeding of the dairy cow has changed over the last sixty years. The first cows here in Gwent in the 1920's were the Dairy Shorthorns and the Beef Shorthorns, and there was then what were known as the dual purpose animals where a Dairy Shorthorn was crossed with a Beef Shorthorn which resulted in an

animal that was heavier than the Dairy Shorthorn but which lost some of the milk producing ability and so yielded less milk. The Dairy Shorthorn cow was quite a good animal in many respects, it was bred naturally on many farms by keeping a bull calf born out of what was regarded as one of the best cows., the breed was generally docile and even the mature bulls could be handled.

Then the Friesian breed from Holland and South Africa caught the attention of shall we say the more progressive British dairy farmers in that these animals had a potential to produce more milk. In our district of Mathern one of the first to keep Friesians was Mr. G.L. Stafford of Bradbury Farm at Crick, he was not a farmer by birth but he took the tenancy of Bradbury Farm after serving in the First World War. It was probably in the late 1920's that Mr. Stafford went to Bristol and bought a Friesian bull bred by Hales, and my father took some of his best Shorthorn cows to be mated with this bull. Indeed the first Friesian bull at Green Meadow Farm was out of Sally the best Shorthorn cow we had, this bull had Friesian markings and I remember him, and there is a photograph of him being held by Bill Dando in the early 1930's. We also kept a son of this bull out of another of our cows.

In the 1940's my father started breeding pedigree Friesians with cattle we bought from Bissell Brothers of Monmouth, we bought a stock bull Barwyke Nartrix who was bred from the great bull Terling Marthus. It was a fairly lengthy process to find out if a bull was in fact improving the herd. The next step was to start officially recording the herd. I well remember the early days when Mr. R.S. Jones rode an auto-cycle from 5 Somerton Place in Newport to do the recording, the milk from each cow was poured into his special bucket and was weighed on an official scales, also he took a small sample which was placed in a bottle to be sent away for analysis to check the butterfat content of the milk from each cow; and all the records were written up by hand. A one thousand gallon herd average per lactation was regarded as being very good in those days

Then along came A.I. (Artificial Insemination) and that was real progress, it enabled the farmer to breed from his cows using the semen from some very well bred and proven bulls all at very modest fees. This also meant that farmers did not have to keep their own bull, saving costs and removing possible elements of danger from animals, that have the potential to be difficult to handle. In this day and age farmers do not realise how lucky they are in that they do not have to buy and keep a stock bull. This service applies to all dairy breeds and also to beef breeds.



As for dairy breeds the biggest impact has been the introduction of the Holstein Friesians, and there is no doubt that they have brought the ability to produce large quantities of milk. There was in the 1940's a Dutch type of Friesian that was small and sturdy, it was also good for beef production but it did fall a little short in the quantity of milk it could produce. Whereas the Holstein Friesians were the opposite the fact that they had the ability to produce large quantities of milk is without question and the herd average of one thousand gallons per cow per lactation which had been regarded as very good was greatly improved upon by these Holstein Friesians. But I do feel that these Holstein Friesians have perhaps done some harm to the beef cross cattle in that their extreme dairy stature shows up in some of the animals resulting from crossing these cows with a beef bull. No matter what avenue of life you wander through there are always pluses and minuses, with the Holstein the capacity to produce milk is unquestionable but I notice that some of them are rather prone to foot and leg problems and in the days when we bred horses the saying "no foot no horse" and that is equally true with dairy cows and from two very important angles the breeders of bulls for A.I. stock should pay a great deal of notice of this aspect of the dairy cow. They do have to spend a lot of time walking and their feet and pastern joints need to be strong and sound and no matter what system of winter housing is employed there is always the bugbear of slurry and cows with weak joints and poor feet do suffer.

Then from a management point of view dealing with cow's feet is not only quite dangerous but also quite hard work and from a monetary point of view the long term effect is considerable. Once a calf is born and reared and enters the herd the more lactations that she can complete the more profit she will make for the farmer. So when we compare breeding dairy cows sixty years ago there were two options, you either bred your own replacements or you bought cows in from any number of sources. There were the local markets, the annual collective sales of Irish dairy heifers usually two years old, and there were in the farming press offers of dairy cows for sale on hire purchase. I well remember one in particular from the North of England,

"J. WALTON, I SUPPLY A COW WORTH MILKING".

This was accompanied by a picture of an Ayrshire cow.

In those days you either kept your own bull or you took your cow when she was bulling to a neighbours bull for a standard fee of five shillings, today that would be twenty five pence. We kept a Friesian bull at Green Meadow when I was a lad and I remember father

used to send a man with the bull to a local farm to serve a cow for a fee of seven shillings and sixpence which would be thirty seven and a half pence today. It was a long process to prove the merit or otherwise of a bull's breeding ability and success or failure was in the farmers hands. Now the process is in the hands of the A.I. operators and it is critical that a bull at the A.I. stud should be proved capable of producing good stock, because each bull has the potential to sire very many progeny.

I will just refer to the breeding process once the heifer calf is born, before man started breeding cows to produce milk for humans the cows teats and udders tended to be larger and nearer to the ground and the new born calf can at times find it difficult to find the mothers teats and from my experience the sooner the calf after being licked dry by the mother can take milk from the mother the better it is for both of them. I have written this before, but a rubber teat on a wine bottle is best for a few days if the calf has to be reared by hand. Young calves will soon eat a little hay and the mark of a good stockman is that the hay is fairly fine and good and well teased out, not a wad of hay just placed in the rack.

Then we come to the feeding of the cow and what cows like above all else is fresh young grass and providing that weather conditions are reasonably kind that is the food which will enable milk to be produced at the lowest cost and you do not need a degree in maths to work that out. The grass grows, the cow walks to her food, she helps herself to how much she requires and she turns it into milk, there are a few requirements it has to be young and long enough so that she can eat enough for her requirements in a fairly short space of time, the distance she has to walk to get the grass should not be too great and she does need a plentiful supply of water.

It sounds and looks so easy on paper and in spring if conditions are not too wet or too cold then all will be well but if the weather is not kind results can suffer, similarly in the autumn kind weather makes all the difference. Perhaps we could say that producing milk from grazed grass is a reasonable way of making a living, but then ideally a cow should have a calf every twelve months, she should dried off to have eight weeks rest, but planning the calving pattern of the herd is important because the people who buy the milk need a regular supply throughout the year, this means that cows have to be milked and fed during the winter months.

I have written earlier on how we used to feed our cows sixty years ago and with the smaller size of the herds and the simple feeding system there was far less stress than there is

these days. With the size of the herds these days providing enough of the right sort of hay would be difficult if not impossible due to the unpredictability of our weather so we are in the age of silage, which although it benefits from some sunshine when it is being made the long periods of dry weather essential to make good hay are not critical for making good silage. We have both grass and maize silage and both can be very good and with the machinery available today it can be got into the clamp or silage pit very quickly and with very little manual labour. Also it can by the use of machinery be fed to the cows again without a lot of physical effort, silage is a good food for dairy cows but because of the harvesting and feeding cost it is not as cheap as when the cows graze the grass in the fields.

But we do have to contend with winter now on average cows can graze grass up until the end of October, although at that time the quality is quite low and they can usually go back out to grass again by the end of March, these dates are good targets to aim for here in Gwent but the weather can make it a week or two earlier or later depending on how kind nature is in any particular season.

So today the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2000 it has been very wet, we had a very wet September with 159mm of rain and to date this month we have had 94mm. our son David is farming the farm where I was born and he still runs a dairy herd, and I go down to the farm twice every day at morning and evening milking and he like all dairy farmers today keeps a larger herd than I did and very much larger herd than his grandfather kept. His cows have just been shut in off the grass at night but they still go out by day.

These days as always we have clever people who predict the future, but as an old man who should have learned something from all my experience I know that life is full of surprises and predictions can at times be way off the mark. All around me I see people obtaining high salaries and the only investment they have to make is for a ball point pen, they only work a forty hour week, they get paid holidays and their work is carried out in comfort protected from the vagaries of the weather, so are we farmers fools to do what we do. It is the age old question why do fishermen face the stormy seas, why do farmers milk cows; perhaps it is just that it is in the blood!!

Perhaps it could be said that I have covered the subject of milk production from many angles, one of the reasons that I have taken on writing about milk is an historical one, many of the methods connected with this wonderful commodity is history and as such this is a true record of the facts, because as the saying goes "I was there".

Whilst on the subject I will venture into the uses that milk can be put to. In humans as well as in many animals the young depend on their mother's milk as nourishment when they are newly born and until they are able to eat and digest solid food. In the farming world, so often a new born lamb, calf or foal are all very vulnerable to the cold, but when by whatever means some of their mothers milk can be got into their stomachs the transformation is remarkable, it is life giving, and I think it is to utter disgrace of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher that when she was in power she withdrew the free milk for schoolchildren, the only reason given was one of cost, but I think this a very short-sighted reason as it is so detrimental to the health of our children and this I believe is of the utmost importance it helps to keep them healthy and they are a fine investment.

There is the question of whether milk can carry unwanted germs or using the modern idiom pathogens. That is where pasteurisation comes in, it is a fact that this heat treatment of milk does kill harmful bugs that may be in milk because we have to agree that milk is a wonderful breeding ground for things undesirable but at the same time this heat can harm certain vitamins. In a perfect world there should not be any need to pasteurise milk but in these days when the number of cows one person is expected to milk and manage properly means that it is not possible to give the close attention to detail that is necessary and with the coming of the robotic milkers the situation can only get worse. I have watched a lot of people in the milking parlour and I still maintain that no matter how modern the milking parlour is with a slovenly cow person the cleanliness could be open to question. What is required is a dedicated thoroughness and attention to detail at all times. The one saving grace could be that a sample of the milk produced is taken every day for analysis at the time of collection by the tanker driver and so that should mean that bad habits are found out and corrective action taken.

It is all very well for milk buyers to screw down the price paid to the producers but this does result in efforts being made to cut costs and this often results in insufficient staff being available to milk the cows properly and to the cutting of corners, it could be said that this is a hobby horse of mine and that I am living in the past, that is as maybe but this is how I see the problem at this point of time.

Maybe if this written work survives and it is read in twenty or thirty years time then things may be very different then or there may be some truth in what I have written. At present most people in this country of ours are town dwellers and they know very little about

how their food is produced and quite a lot do not care providing that it is cheap to buy and available conveniently. Items such as milk and cream and other dairy products are today packed in clean easy to open containers and this is a very long way from a cow walking into the milking parlour on a cold wet winter's morning with dung all over her udder until the product reaches the end user customer as a healthy product.

We installed a new parlour in which to milk the cows in 1980, and we added several new aspects. There was a supply of warm water piped to each milking point with which the cow's udders could be washed and the milk was transferred direct to the bulk tank in the dairy having been pre-cooled on the way. The cows were fed some concentrate in the parlour but as these cows had been bred to give high yields they were not in the parlour long enough to eat all the concentrate they required. To overcome this problem a system of electronically controlled feeding was introduced. This involved a feeding station being erected in the loafing area frequented by the cows with a bulk feed storage above it and an electronically controlled dispensing system. The cows were fitted with collars that contained a transponder and these transponders were set by computer to give each cow access to the correct amount of concentrate she should have each day. As the cow entered the feeding station the transponder triggered the dispensing unit to provide the concentrate for that cow and when she had had her day's allocation no more would be dispensed and we found that this system worked very well.

Here in the U.K. we do have some control over production methods but when these products come from other countries the conditions under which they are produced are rarely as carefully controlled or monitored as they are here. Perhaps I could say or rather write a little on some of these products. It is not all that long ago, certainly within living memory when the majority of livestock farms were small family farms keeping a small herd of cows and after these cows were milked by hand the milk would be placed in shallow vessels and left to stand to allow the cream to rise to the surface, the farmer's wife would then skim the cream off with a special cream skimmer leaving the skimmed milk in the vessels. The resulting cream would often be made into butter by the farmer's wife and sold locally. As a lad I can remember that in the town of Newport there was at that time an indoor market, it was in a two storey building and both floors were divided into stalls which could be hired from the Council for the day for a small fee. My stepmother used to take dressed poultry to sell and another farmer's wife used to take homemade butter wrapped up in a dock leaf.

To make and handle farmhouse butter the ladies would use what we called Scotch hands, these were made of wood they were about eight inches by four inches with a plain handle, the wood was plain on one side but the other side was grooved, these were used to work the cream into butter. Then as our cities grew and demand increased family dairy farms came into being and instead of a side line for the farmers wife farmers specialized in producing milk, then the town dairies came on the scene, also as I have written earlier the milk separator came on the market in-place of the cream skimmers. We had one at Green Meadow as I wrote and it did work very well with the warm milk put into the bowl on the top, the unit was operated by turning a handle by hand and the cream came out of one spout and the skimmed milk came out of the other spout; there was an adjustment that could be made to alter the thickness of the cream. The warm skimmed milk we fed to the calves and the pigs. The worst part of the job was washing the many steel plates of the inside of the separator where the cream was separated. We also had a pair of these Scotch hands at home I well remember them being used to make butter, it was all at a time when you could not find a buyer for the milk we produced.

It would be as well to briefly touch on cheese making at Green Meadow, as I have written earlier the farm was built on a green field site in 1920 and it did cater for a small herd of six cows and there was a purpose built dairy that was attached to the house, it had its own outside door, there was a large concrete slab on which the work was done and the products were stored. There was a cheese press for two cheese vats with weights all complete. The system as I remember it was that the cheese curd was put into galvanised vats, each holding about nine and a half litres and the weight was gradually built up to squeeze out the whey but it was not very successful, I remember the cheese being put out on the yard for the chickens to eat.

I wrote earlier of the coming of the M.M.B. and this put the business of milk production onto a whole new footing and farmhouse butter and cheese making virtually came to an end. It was not until I was a student at Usk College that I got back into the many aspects of milk processing although it was only cream, butter and cheese production that we were involved in on our course which was general agriculture, but it did include dairying although dairying could be taken as a main subject which a few boys did but it was mainly the girls who did the pure dairying course. We were taught the basic art of butter making and not wishing to be boastful in any way but I did become quite good at it, even to the extent that I

could have made a career out of it. I was lucky in a way that I had met up with two ladies Miss Trippe and Miss Craig in milking competitions. We were modern in those days in that we used butter churns, these were special churns mounted on a framework with a spindle and they had to be turned end over end to turn the cream into butter, on the one end there was a small sight glass which you had to watch when churning for butter as the when the cream starts to break you have to adjust the speed at which you turn the handle, if you turn too slowly the butter will just be large lumps, the ideal is to get the butter into fine grains like sago or No. 5 pellets in a twelve bore shotgun cartridge.

As students we took this butter from the butter churn to the butter worker which was a long table like structure which was operated by turning a handle that extracted any water that was left after churning the cream, this water we called butter milk which was used to feed the calves and the pigs. The process that I found the most rewarding part of making butter was after the water had been removed to use the Scotch hands to form the butter into blocks usually of one pound in weight, oblong in shape and to create a design on the surface of the blocks with the grooves on one side of the Scotch Hands.

Of course now in the year 2000 it is all so very different, butter is mass produced by mechanical means wrapped on plastic or put into plastic containers as compared to the farmer's wife wrapping the butter in a dock leaf. As always this is a matter of economics, nowadays the farmer's wives are going off the farm to work in the city stores or offices or they are dealing with the secretarial problems that farming is afflicted with nowadays. I just wonder have we lost some individual flavour from butter today in the dock leaf days in the winter when the basic food for the cows was old meadow hay which if well made had the smell of old grass species and of herbs growing naturally in the meadows and this could affect the milk and through the milk it could impart the taste into the butter on the farm, the same would apply in the summer months with the cows grazing the permanent pasture of the traditional meadows to again give individual flavours to the dairy products.

Now that we expect greater production per acre from fertilized young leys grazed and cut for silage and also from maize silage, and then the milk from many farms is all bulked together on collection and taken to the butter making factories. It is not for me to write today regarding the cleanliness of the process of butter production and if it is better than it was years ago, then that is a good thing, but as in many aspects of modern day life all is dictated to by economics. Just for illustration and for the benefit of those people that follow in the future, in

our village of Shirenewton there is a row of six country cottages of the type that would originally have been occupied by farm workers and the like for a rental of three shillings (15 pence today) per week. Some time during the late 1950's my father bought No. 3 for about £3000 and when he died he left it in his will to my sister Olwen who later sold it in 1970 for £7900, today October 27<sup>th</sup>. 2000 it is for sale with the Agents Michael and Moon for £129,000, there have been a few improvements to the property along the way, but it is still just two bedrooms and in a row.

As I write these notes today it is very wet and gloomy and we are almost at the end of the month which for the most part the weather has been just the same as it is today. The point I am trying to make is that we are in changing times, in the dock leaf days where the farm workers helping to produce the milk were paid £1.12.00 (160 pence today) for a weeks work and his only means of transport was his own two legs and holidays were non existent. Thankfully the life of those who work on the land has improved, but some parts of it are still hard compared to other walks of life, but by far the greatest benefactors are the shoppers that mass of people that buy their food in all its many forms. Having written on the subject of butter with the by product of skimmed milk much of which is made into a powder which can be used and exported to anywhere in the world to satisfy so many needs and uses.

We have cheese which although made from milk comes in many different forms, both consistency and flavour whereas butter although there may be slight variations of flavour the consistency is always very much the same. As a student I learned the basics of cheese making but it really is an art of its own. Cheese can be made out of milk from many animals, it is mainly made from cow's milk but it is also made from goat's milk and also sheep's milk. Here again we have a product that is mass produced and can be exported and imported to and from anywhere in the world. A classic example is Cheddar cheese which although it is of British origin with a British name is now made in other parts of the world and at times the cheese made abroad can be bought very cheaply. The staple diet years ago at midday for manual workers was bread and cheese and a raw onion, this would provide protein and some fat from the cheese, carbohydrate from the bread and vitamins and minerals from the raw onions. This applies in the 1930's and before and if one stops to consider and picture a farm worker at midday with his bread and cheese dinner he was fitter and more able to carry out his duties than if he had sat down to a three course cooked lunch. I do notice these days quite a lot of fairly young men with fairly large stomachs, and when you stop and realise that many



of them are sat down at work very often just watching screens and pressing buttons and at home they just sit down watching television so really there is little wonder that without any physical exercise and exertion that they have these large stomachs.

Having strayed a little from cheese there is no doubt that it is a very good food and it is available in many different forms and it is very useful in the multitude of ways that it is used by the cooking profession. I do not think it is necessary for me to go into all the different cheeses, there are those that are traditional because of location and this could be influenced by the type of herbage and the climate of the area in which they are produced, water source and the method of production that is used and these factors could all affect the texture and flavour of the cheese. The length of time that the cheese is left to mature is also important, for example Caerphilly cheese should be eaten when it is quite young whereas some of the blue vein cheeses need time to mature and they taste better when eaten with a spring onion and lettuce whereas some can be very pleasant when accompanied by a biscuit and some good red wine.

A product produced from milk that is fairly new and that has become very popular is Yoghurt, this was never around when I was young and it is a food that I eat very little of, yet is very good and it has an appeal to the young and to the ladies as it is non fattening and to be fair if a woman is healthy at around the age of forty there is a tendency for them to put on weight and this is only natural and quite pleasing to a certain extent, yet as in all things there are limits which should be kept to if possible, putting on too much weight can be bad for the health and also is a problem as far as clothes are concerned.

There are many other products that are derived from milk and if for some reason the supply of milk dried up world wide, then and only then would we realise what a very important part of life milk has become, it is like the old saying that you do not miss the water until the well runs dry.

These notes cover a period of seventy years of actual involvement so this is not hearsay but actual facts that I have experienced. It is common knowledge that with elderly people such as my self that the memories of youth are as plain as can be but recent events can and do fade from the memory; the human brain must be a remarkable structure to be able to store so much detail so well. That is why I think boxing is so infantile and stupid, to batter such a wonderful part of the human body, that is the head which contains the brain and there is a real risk of damage to the brain; until the person lies prostrate on the floor.

At this point in time I can not be blamed for wondering what will be the state of the dairy industry in the next seventy years. Would it be possible to feed grass and the other foods that cows eat into a machine and get milk out on tap without the need for cows? We are in the press button age much of which I do not understand, I suppose the method of me sitting here with my pen in my hand writing these notes will become a thing of the past, yet even so the pen I hold is modern compared with the writing instrument made from a quill feather that was the only writing tool that was available many years ago, it was dipped into the ink, some words were written and the quill would have to be repeatedly dipped into the ink whereas I can keep writing with my fountain pen with its ready supply of ink.

There is the other aspect of milk production which nowadays we take for granted and that is the breed of cow that is used. At one time breeds used were very much related to the territory or area where they were kept and the reason for this was that the breeds were developed to cope with the local climate and terrain. For example Ayrshire cows were kept mainly in Scotland and the North of England they were a hardy tough breed but not too big then we had Devon cattle, Jersey and Guernsey cattle all suited to those particular locations and there were many more local breeds, a lot of them bred and kept in that part of the country for these reasons and many of these breeds still survive in the hands of a few people dedicated to keeping these rare breeds in existence.

Just at this moment in time, October 30<sup>th</sup> 2000 there is much concern among dairy farmers about the price they receive for the milk they produce and this price since the end of the M.M.B. does vary depending on the different buyers and of late it has been between fifteen and eighteen pence per litre which is only just above the cost of production and as a result many herds are being sold and what is interesting is that these herds being sold are mostly of Holstein Friesians. There is another very modern part of dairy farming that is difficult to manage and that is the milk quota system, not all that long ago when I decided to enlarge the size of the herd and update the whole business in 1979 you just produced as much as you wanted to. Then sometime in early 1980, it may have been 1983 each dairy farm was given a quota of milk that it could produce, the amount depended on previous production and it was very fortunate that I had increased the size of the herd when I did. The quota when given attaches to the farm and there have been and there still are instances where a dairy farmer has ceased milk production and he is able to lease his quota for a year to give him a steady income or if he owns the land he can sell his quota outright, but not so if he is a tenant.

It does cause a lot of problems trying to keep within the quota limit because if the country is over quota in total then the individuals who are over quota themselves are penalised by receiving a lower price for the milk that they produce over their quota. Then awful B.S.E. is another awful and dramatic event. For the record I will set down our involvement at Green Meadow. When I was enlarging the herd in 1979 I bought some cows in but really my policy was to breed my own replacements so we reared a bunch of heifers that all received the same feed. A young cow out of one of these bunches of heifers became a bit odd, she would kick out at you for no reason and she was diagnosed by our vet as having B.S.E. thankfully that was the only case that we had but the part I can not understand was why with these home bred cows all fed the same and the animals never left the farm why was that one affected? It makes me wonder if anyone really knows the cause of these really awful problems caused by this devastating disease.

There must have been millions of beef-burgers eaten before we became aware of this disease B.S.E. the problem is as with all processed food where profit is concerned there are those people who will do anything and cut any corners to increase their profits with no regard for the effect their actions will have. A joint of meat is a joint and that is that but such things as pies, sausages and burgers and the like the source of the meat could be open to question. With the introduction of regulations that are now in existence and are quite strict the process of meat recovery as the process for obtaining meat for these products is known should mean that doubtful practices have been eliminated. There are in all walks of life those whose deeds are suspect, even some farmers. For instance not many years ago in the livestock world you could find a buyer at a price for anything and if a farmer had an animal that was not quite right the buyer would come to the farm and he would buy the animal at a price, the farmer would sell and naturally the farmer would not ask the buyer what he was going to do with the animal.

Likewise at one time local butchers had their small slaughterhouses and there were small abattoirs scattered around wherever they were needed, and in the case of the local butchers slaughterhouses these were beneficial to both the animals and the general public in that the public were sure of getting good local beef and the animals were not subject to the stress of long journeys to the abattoirs. When we had our local small livestock markets where I and other farmers sold our fat livestock the buyers knew which farms produced good quality

animals, the butchers bought these animals and they would be kept in comfort in the butcher's slaughterhouse overnight and then the next day they would be quietly and humanely killed. But as in all aspects of life it was open to abuse and there were those who would sell or use meat for purposes for which it was not fit. The result was that a lot of these small abattoirs were closed down and the result is that now animals are transported long distances and also the cost of inspections of these abattoirs has risen quite considerably. The meat should be safer to eat but whether it is any better I rather doubt.

There is no doubt that B.S.E. has dealt a severe financial blow to many cattle farmers both beef and dairy farmers, I was looking through some notes of mine for January of this year and I saw that there was a lot of calves taken to the Curre Hunt kennels to be shot because they were not worth taking to market. My son David took a good Friesian bull calf ten days old to Newport market where it was sold but after paying the auctioneer and market charges he received just seventy two pence, not many years ago that calf would have sold for £75.00 at least, and the market for cull cows has been similarly affected, an average cull Friesian cow would a few years ago have been worth £600 to £750 but now the price has dropped to about £250 and any poor cows can not find a buyer and they often have to be killed and burnt.

Some figures I have for 1994 show that 533,194 people died from various causes but of these six people died from the new form of C.J.D. This is six too many and if only the powers that be could prove something positive about the cause action could be taken to prevent these deaths. This awful disease is bound to come from somewhere, is there a possibility that it started in human beings and was passed to animals via sewage or sewage sludge which at times is applied to the fields as a fertilizer.

The devastating Swine fever outbreak which is causing such terrible hardship to pig farmers was supposedly started from a discarded ham sandwich produced abroad with meat from an infected animal. This week we have had the long awaited B.S.E. report and I hear about it as I drive down to the farm listening to B.B.C. programme Farming Today on the radio from 5.30 to 6am, the news is so depressing that it is enough to drive anyone over the edge, I am sick of hearing about it.

On a lighter note something that is taken for granted is the electric fence, this is quite a recent innovation as farming goes, there was no such a thing when I was young. It came into general use probably about the 1950's. Fencing has always played a major role in my farming operations, we were mainly stock farmers although during the war we had to plough about 40% of each farm, four acres in every ten and grow arable crops on this land. I was quite happy with ploughed land, although all tractor work meant you were exposed to the elements at all times as there were no such thing as tractor cabs, and in fact I think for ploughing it was better without a cab as you could see much more of what was happening, but not so good in the wet weather. The Standard Fordson tractor of which there were probably thousands in use during the war years was a wonderful machine for its time in many respects, the first one we had at home cost £165.00 new, the early models had full width mudguards and also rubber tractor tyres, but for economy the later ones like the one we had only had half width mudguards and steel wheels front and back the rear wheels being fitted with spade lugs to give grip. These economies did give rise to a disadvantage when working the land in dry weather especially if there was any breeze, the wheels came level with the top of these half mudguards and the wind blowing the spade lugs of the rear wheels would blow the dusty earth over the driver and often into the eyes which was most unpleasant. After a while we fitted some large ex army lorry wheels to the rear axle, but we kept the steel front wheels and these used to vibrate terribly when travelling on the road and the front wheel bearings wore out quite quickly.

This is such a long time ago and the tractor drivers of today could never imagine how primitive tractors were fifty years ago. Yet again I have drifted away from the subject which was fencing and electric fencing and how very useful this is.

Quite a lot of people give sheep a bad reputation for breaking out or for not staying in the field that they are supposed to be in. I have worked with sheep for a long time sixty or more years and I have found that if you erect a sheep proof fence with wire netting they will stay content, but if you wait for the sheep to get out and then rush about erecting fencing the sheep will by then have got into bad habits and will escape at every opportunity. I have found it more difficult to contain cattle at certain times of the year, in fact I have never been able to put up a fence that cattle will respect, even with barbed wire they will push their heads over it or through it if there is some thing, usually grass the other side which they fancy. Yet they

will respect just one strand of electric fence wire. With electric fencing even here there have been improvements, we started off with single strand plain wire which was very difficult to take down and to rewind, then we had the multiple strand wire which was better being more flexible and now we have plastic and stainless steel wire which is very good. The fencer unit we started with was the Wolsley Bell type fencing unit with power from a battery but now we have the mains operated unit, and there is no doubt that electric fencing can be a very useful part of many forms of farming with cattle. Electric fencing is perhaps not so successful with sheep.

I think I have covered the subject of MILK from many angles, the production which has always been a challenge and the methods have been and still are forever changing, what the future holds I for one would not like to say, only that whatever the system is providing that the person doing the job has the time and wish to do it properly with the knowledge that he has to do his part to ensure that it is fit for human consumption even when it is drunk or used straight from the cow, this needs to be done and the fact that it is heat treated to kill any bacteria before being sold to the retail customers, this is just a safeguard. Not wishing to be morbid in any way yet I know and realise that we all have to pass on eventually and I just wonder if when someone clears my desk and finds these so say books of mine will they end up in the rubbish bin or will they by chance be read. If by chance the reader has got this far thank you for doing me the honour.

**Ernest E. Jones.**

### **The St. Pierre Estate.**

It is March 14<sup>th</sup> 2002 on a very cold day so I thought that before age really takes over I would attempt to write down my knowledge of St. Pierre from the time that I first knew it some seventy years ago. The large manor house and the surrounding estate was owned by the Lewis family of whom I know very little, only that they did own a pack of hounds which were the origin of the Curre hounds at Itton. Then in the early 1920's for whatever reason the Lewis family sold some of their estate, some quite good farms including Hayes Gate Farm, Broadwell Farm and the old village of Runston and other land including the St. Pierre Park.

The M.C.C. (Monmouthshire County Council) bought quite a lot of the land to create small holdings. The park, the lodges and the manor House was bought by the steel manufacturers, Lysaghts. The Lysaght family lived in some style with a full domestic staff a team of gardeners, the head gardener was Mr. Frank Harris who lived in the bottom Lodge, this Lodge was demolished when the A 48 was altered at Hayes Gate to enable the M4 motorway to be built. The top Lodge was occupied by the park keeper and there was a herd of deer in the park and once a year the police marksmen were invited to shoot so many deer.

As children coming home from Sunday school held at St. Pierre Church we would try and part the deer to have some each side of the drive, if we were successful then the deer would leap over the drive to try and get back together. We were not allowed to go into the park but we did pocket any conkers or sweet chestnuts that we found on the drive. The Lysaght family also owned a very large chauffeur driven car, Mrs. Lysaght was a real lady and when she came to the little church of St. Pierre she had her own pew at the front and she always came into the church through a little door from the big house, she did not use the door that the general congregation used, and this was not regarded as unusual, it was the accepted custom.

I could never make out how the boundaries came about, our farm at Green Meadow was in the parish of Mathern and my father never went to St. Pierre Church and my mother is buried at Mathern, I never knew if she had any religious beliefs and it is too late to find out now. As children we went to St. Pierre Sunday school and our teacher was Mrs. Harris, the wife of the gardener who lived in the lower lodge. The Sunday school was held every Sunday at three o'clock before the main service. We did look forward to Christmas as Sunday school children we were invited by Mrs. Lysaght to the big house to a Christmas party with a real

Christmas tree with candles and there was a present for each of us and we would sing a carol for Mrs. Lysaght and her sister, I never saw a Mr. Lysaght.

The times have changed, one of the things that I remember is the lodge at Hayes Gate which has now gone, but in the summertime there were always red geraniums in the front of the lodge. I also remember the deer in the park, the peacocks in the garden and the swans on the lake; it was a piece of real aristocratic English life. Maybe it could be criticised as there was inequality about it, but when I see and hear of the crime, the drug problems and violence so prevalent today they were I believe much better days.

Just to recap for a moment our son David is farming where his grandfather was farming seventy years ago, he was not making a lot of money then but he had an easier life than David does now, today it is a numbers game and you have to keep a given number to be able to make a profit. After a successful knee replacement operation I was supposed to retire, then I heard that he was getting over worked so I went back to help him out.

For a period before the last war there was a Mr. Farmer in charge of the park and my father sent some cattle there on tack, this was a system where your cattle grazed other people's land for a payment of so much per head per day. These days St. Pierre is better known as a Golf and Country Club and a lot of money is involved and what Mrs. Lysaght would have to say about this I fail to think.

When I lived at Green Meadow with my wife Winifred our children went to Sunday school at St. Pierre and our three daughters were married in the church at St. Pierre. For a time Winifred was a church warden at St. Pierre. I am not very satisfied with this latest effort of mine, this is an awful pen and age is getting the better of me.

Added December 10<sup>th</sup>. 2007. aren't I lucky to be still here and able to write, in fact I have a catalogue of the sale of St. Pierre dated 22<sup>nd</sup>. Of September 1919 conducted by the trustees of the late Captain Freke Lewis and it was a large estate of 2724 acres and that did not include the park, the main house and adjacent land.

I do treasure those days as a child going to St. Pierre Sunday school. Not long ago I had occasion to go to St. Pierre and I was able to look back over memories of seventy years ago. My short term memory is not so good, but memories of the days when we went to Sunday school as country children in the Lysaght days are to me very real. I remember the deer, the rabbits, the swans and the peacocks on the churchyard wall, the single bell in the



church, we did not have much money but there was honesty and thrift and we had a great respect for things in life.

How lucky I was to be able to compare how it was in those days to what it is now as a golf complex with great wealth, but I would prefer the old days and I have no regrets of being born when I was.

**Ernest E. Jones.**

## **Some Poems I have Written**

### **Spring Rain.**

When April rain is warm and soft  
The flowers lift their heads aloft.  
Merry birds sing in the trees  
When winter sportsmen pack their skis,  
The cruel drought from autumn sun  
With cows at pasture is not fun.

Ewes and lambs are breaking out  
Evidence of this awful drought,  
Then in the west the thunder is rolling  
The air is still and warm and looming,  
Storm clouds gather and rain is falling  
Dad comes home his coat is wringing.

As if by magic the grass is growing  
Farmer's wife with face all glowing  
Loves the rain and birds are singing  
While city folk are busy moaning  
Scant regard while counters are heaving  
Without the rain the shops would empty  
With disregard to nature's bounty.

**By; A Countryman.**

**“The True Country Lady”**

Not the pavements with the crowds thronging  
Not fashion shops with tills ringing  
Not the high life with parties and mingling  
Not interested in goings on as such  
Far better the green green grass  
With distant cattle lowing and lambs bleating  
Sheep on hills are resting  
The rain is not hindering  
With scarf and wellies donned  
A stout stick as a friend  
The queen of England, maybe not  
But the queen of Runston surely yes.

**By; A Countryman.**

**Space Age.**

When man can navigate the globe by day and night

Press button digits for work and play

Even so a simple truth is here to stay

Men must eat to stay alive and pray

So to the honest soil he has to turn

For succour even spacemen must return

**By; A Countryman.**

**Runston and the Lady.**

When early dew is shimmering on the grass  
    Footprints are clearly left as we pass  
The heady scent of Hawthorn fills the air  
    One has left the world of cheap despair  
    Swapped for the richness all around  
This is nature and the hallowed ground  
    Surely this is Runston I'll be bound  
    The lady walks with an earthy step  
With a smile the equal of which I have not seen yet  
    I wager that Keats or Byron or the rest  
    Have penned a rhyme to call this second best  
    For here is truth I know too well  
Not a poet's dream of fantasy on which to dwell.

**By; A Countryman.**

**Willis Hill.**

When the bracken turns to gold  
On Willis Hill  
With the blackbird on the thorn  
Is sitting still  
The ewes in heavy fleece  
Lie in contented peace  
With the lengthening of the days  
The warmth of the sunshine rays  
When birds from overseas  
Return on springtime breeze  
Then the bracken turns bright green  
On Willis Hill.

**By; A Countryman.**

Willis Hill can be seen from Runston. It was part of New Hall Farm when the Harris family owned it.

### **Thoughts of Spring.**

In spring when daffodils are nodding  
Blackbirds are so busy prodding  
The brook it has a merry tune  
No rush to get there ere too soon  
The summer with the sun on high  
Our brook meanders with a sigh  
The birds they come to wash and drink  
The gardener sits by just to think  
Then autumn and the leaves are falling  
The blackbird to its mate is calling  
The heady days of summer fading  
Leaves to fall are fast decaying  
The winter comes, the brook is angry  
Claws the bank in noisy fury  
Seems there is no time to stay  
Carries sticks and all and sundry  
As it hurries on its way  
To Mounon, Mathern and the sea.

**By; A Countryman.**

## **Sounds of Night.**

Tis January and the year is new  
The night is dark and still  
Only the owl hoots in yonder wood  
The night sounds all countrymen know  
There is a blood curdling scream  
Like that of a frightened woman  
The children hurrying home are scared  
The keeper on his nightly rounds  
Don't be affeared young uns  
Tis only the vixen calling her mate  
Bide you still a while and listen  
In the darkness from the nearby wood  
Reynard answers with his gruff reply  
There ye be young uns, off home  
Leave nature to darkness and to me.

**By; A Countryman.**



**Silent Snow.**

Winter's cruel north wind blows  
With ice cool witch like fingers  
By evening an eerie stillness flows  
The sky a pink glow that lingers  
Then like a thief's nightly prow  
The first flakes white as snow  
By morning a white world profound  
The children rush to play  
The farmer buttons his coat  
Snow brings a price he has to pay  
sheep rush for their hay  
Looking skywards at the end of day  
Hoping no more snow on its way

**By; A Countryman.**

## **The Snowdrop.**

Sleeping there beneath the trees  
Clocks and time not important  
New Year comes in with a freeze  
Spring and flowers are in the distance  
Though its spring the threat of snow  
Small green shoots begin to show  
Then with the lengthening days  
Warm spring rain and sunshine rays  
Herald of spring with all its beauty  
The humble snowdrop, pure and simple  
Nature designed a perfect shape  
To combat cold that can castigate  
The grander flowers at a later date  
They give so much and ask so little  
A cosy nook beneath the tress  
In the distant past  
A simple country lad  
To show his love  
Left those dainty gems  
For a lady to match her  
Loveliness and grace

**By; A Countryman.**

**Modern Age.**

In this modern age of easy flight  
When man can navigate the globe  
By day and night  
Bar coding press buttons  
For work and play  
Even so a simple truth  
Is here to stay  
Man must eat to stay alive and pray  
To the honest soil man must turn  
For succour even space man must return

**By; A Countryman.**

**To Quote.**

To have consideration for others  
Is a gift of mankind

Look backward with gratitude  
Look forward with hope  
Look upward with confidence

We are born individuals  
Let us not die copies

**By; A Countryman.**

## **The Runston Rock.**

High up on the Runston rock  
Where the wind blows free  
There the lovely buzzard flies  
On a wing so free  
While down below the lowly mouse  
Must ever watchful be  
So throughout the seasons  
As nature did ordain  
From spring to spring again  
Then man came with intentions  
To take this hill away  
Take it to the wet lands  
To build a factory  
He came with tractors mighty  
He came with dynamite  
They clapped their hands excited  
With gold gleaming in their eyes  
Then they hit Runston bedrock  
And the tables turned  
They slunk away defeated  
Never to return  
Then nature came as always  
To hide up manmade scars  
She sent her plants and flowers  
To sleep beneath the stars

Now the lonely vixen  
On her nightly prowls  
Sniffs around these ancient rocks  
Lets out her eerie howl  
The ghosts of men of Runston  
Where the air is still  
Well know their hill will be there  
From age to age again  
On warm and balmy evenings  
When the sun is set  
And my time is over  
At the journeys end  
That is where I wish to be  
High up on the Runston rock  
Where the wind blows free.

**By; A Countryman.**

Notes added:-

I have never liked the thought of someone digging a grave for me, far easier to be turned into ashes and then scattered, but that is for others to decide. E.E.J. It was probably in the 1960's that the man who bought the Runston farm from the Wood's family who changed it into a farm; when it was on the St. Pierre estate it was a pair of cottages part of Broadwell farm. The man was hoping to sell a lot of stone to be used in the construction of Llanwern steel works, but the bedrock proved to be too difficult to quarry and the project failed. That man had a heart attack and died on the side of the road at Runston farm, and another man connected with the project went bankrupt and shot himself, the other person is still around. **E.E.J.**

**St. Valentine.**

Life is not as it has been  
Though the grass is still a lovely green  
A country lane we knew so well  
Where nature and her peace did dwell  
An old orchard where the snowdrops grew  
A young man in haste  
Stooped to pick a few  
To leave for a fair young maid to find  
Hoping their love it would help to bind.

**By; A Countryman.**