

## Fair Days

Now like most of the farmers around us we were reared on 10 –14 acre farms and people kept 3 or 4 cows. We kept 4 cows and the fair was very important because it was one of the big sources of income in the year you brought out your calves which had been born 15 months earlier brought them out usually in September until November. You brought them out to the fair and they normally had 3 or 4 calves and you joined with a neighbouring farmer in going to the fair.

The drovers took the cattle to the fairs for people who weren't able to bring them themselves and you normally walked about 8 miles to a fair. There were 8 fairs in our area, there was Carmen, Rock, Cookstown, Ballygawley amongst others and that was at least 2 hours walking you couldn't afford to walk any further.

But these official drovers made their living doing that taking the cattle to the fair and then when they were sold bringing them back again and bringing them maybe to the boat so they were full time employed.

We joined with our local neighbouring farmer Bill Hazelton and we would leave home about 8 in the morning the main reason for that was to get past the school before it opened because the Master wouldn't allow us off. So our job was capping cattle and there was myself my brother and Bill Hazelton. That time the barbed wire wasn't very much used the gaps were all lying open so we had to keep in front of the cattle and we had to hold the cattle back when the man who was in the gap got past.

There were very few cars on the road and the only cars on the road at that time were the people who were interested in buying the cattle. The cattle dealers and we learnt an awful lot about dealing then, even though we're talking back now in about the early 40s, when we were only about 7 or 8 year old. My father and Bill Hazelton used to tell us "Never stop the cattle before you reach the bottom of

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Dungannon Main Street because all of these dealers are people who want to buy the cattle of you at a very bad price, so keep the cattle moving”.

So we brought them into Ann Street and the cattle were sold there and you might have a number of different buyers come along you could be all day it could be night almost before the cattle would be sold if you were very unlucky. And you had these third party's who were people who were almost professionals bargain makers and they saw a man trying to buy cattle of you they would come along and they would try and make the deal. And when you held out your hand and the buyer hit your hand and accepted his price and it was a word of mouth thing and the deal was made and these guinea hunters then were firstly supposed to give them a guinea when cattle were sold in guinea in my early days but then it reverted into pounds.

Then we would take the cattle down and put them in Dungannon we put them in behind all the pubs, the pubs as well as providing al drink when the deal done they had back yards where the cattle was stored and you had to pay six pence to them and the cattle were put in there. Now before you moved the cattle from the market your father was paid in cash. You never moved the cattle without being fully paid for them so you moved them in there and if the deal was done you went to what was called a restaurant in those days they were called eating houses and you got what was called a meat tea and I remember they were one shilling in those days and you took the bus home and that would be the only time in the whole year you would be on the bus.

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