Buying and Selling

and always breed on young stock.

Fair days were great, it was a chance to look at the shops in town and catch up with friends and neighbours. After a good day out you always had to walk home but it was still a great adventure. Fair days were in May, October, November and December in Louisburgh. Fairs are not as common today and now sheep are not sold on the street itself but are sold from farms or at marts. In your village you may have been lucky to have a neighbour with a car so you could book yourself a seat in the car for the next time they were going to town and you would always give them money for the petrol used.

In Killeen beside the church there was a small shop which was open on a Sunday. Here you could order your meat during the week from the shopkeeper and collect it before or after mass. You could also buy cigarettes, tobacco, the weekly paper, Mayo News and the Sunday paper. During the late summer and autumn you could buy apples. This shop was a great meeting place to catch up on the news of the week. The shop closed down in the 1980’s but the ruins are still there today. Apart from the shop at Killeen church there was no trading done on a Sunday, but at Killeen it was not considered trading because your meat was pre ordered during the week. If you were selling animals the dealers would not come and look at the animals on a Sunday. Ash Wednesday and
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Good Friday were also days the shops and pubs were closed. Animals were not killed or butchered on a Monday or Friday.

Living beside the sea fish were plentiful, some fish were preserved in wooden tubs with salt. Some fish left over were sold, you could get up to six shillings for these fish. Most families would kill two pigs a year, one in spring and the other one in autumn. Each farmer picked a different week to kill their pig so the fresh pork was shared by giving some to your neighbours, the rest would be preserved in wooden barrels with salt. Children’s allowance was paid once a month, this was also invaluable for paying bills.

Shoes and wellies were bought once a year and the shopkeeper would allow the bill to be paid around Christmas time when you would have a turkey or a goose to sell as payment or you might get a letter from relatives in America with some money in it or wait until fair day to sell the cattle and pay then.

Travellers would often come and camp around Louisburgh. They would be selling buckets and pots in exchange for milk, butter and bread to feed their family. They would also ask if they could have scrap sheep wool and horse hair. Some travellers would have old tales about their children being able to curl your hair with their finger. Of course, after they had left the house the curl would have fallen out.
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When they were trading they would sometimes leave you with a lovely ornament. They travelled around in traps and ponies on the highways and byways of the country.

Wool was sold once a year around October time and it had to be brought to Louisburgh to a hall which today is the site of the West View Hotel. In later years a truck would bring it to Westport and it would be weighed and sold at Westport Quay. You would then go into Westport that evening and get your money.

Dealers from the Midlands would appoint a buyer in the local area. Mary B. remembered that Richard Bruton’s father was a dealer and would appoint a farmer to be a buyer in the area. The buyer would normally be a local farmer who would know the quantity, type and age of animals wanted and would go from farm to farm buying and collecting these animals and holding them in his farm until they were walked to Westport. From here the animals would travel in cattle containers on the train up to the Midlands. Luck money was always given to the buyer.

Money in those days was in guineas, pounds, shillings, pence and half a crown. Twelve pennies was equal to one shilling. There were also a quarter penny, a half penny, a three penny piece and a six penny piece. There were two hundred and forty pennies in one pound. On each coin there was an animal figure. It was often heard when someone did a days work cutting oats or turf they would say a horse would do for payment, this would be half a
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Crown. Some coins were kept for special occasions such as weddings where gold and silver coins were used during the ceremony.

Times were simple back then but life was very good, they worked hard but they also enjoyed their childhood.

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