



Joe and Mary Murphy with their eleven children front row left to right: twins George and Nicholas, Martin and Lena; centre: twins Nora and Isabel; back row: Margaret, twins Marcus and Raymond, Seamus and Padraic.

and eleven children - which include four sets of twins!

It is certainly difficult to suppress a gasp of amazement at the latter piece of information. How on earth could any woman cope with such a household?

Mary Murphy, contented and smiling by her husband's side says, "It's a team effort. There

was never any time for fighting - everyone just knew what to do and did it!"

The shouts and laughter of numerous young voices which fill in the background indicate that the family thrives.

But imagine feeding such a crowd!

lot of food. But we have our own vegetables; of course. And we kill our own sheep. And we go fishing..."

"And we buy twenty-four loaves of bread a week", says the voice at his elbow.

"This is one family that is never hungry", chimes in a third voice - that of a visiting English cousin, on holiday with wife and five children (Where do they all fit?)

Loneliness is not something that Joe is ever likely to suffer from. But can there be time for any single activity unrelated to family pressures?

"I'm a member of the Mayo IFA", he says. "Secretary, actually, of the organisation which promotes division of commonage and tree-planting. Then one time", he goes on, "I used to ride in all the flapper meetings in Connemara". He still keeps two horses, it transpires, and the children all ride, going off in pairs on day-long treks.

He is also involved in promoting tourism in the area and has acted as a local tour guide, being very knowledgeable about ancient history. Some of this knowledge has been handed down by tradition,

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7. Only a few have decided on careers so far. Margaret likes hairdressing, Seamus mechanics, Raymond is a farmer at heart and Marcus wants to be a vet. It remains to be seen if the hungry acres will keep them all at home.

In reply to a question as to whether she has any hobbies herself, Mary says, "Feeding the sheep", but is uncertain how many are in the flock. She says it's the same as pastor reckoning up his flock of parishioners. "At this very moment some of them may be lying dead, while who knows how many are also being born."

"She plays cards a lot in the winter", says Joe, and she must be a real expert, as her games provide frequent and welcome additions to the larder in the form of geese, turkeys, legs of mutton and other goodies.

Mouth-watering smells are emanating from the kitchen as we talk and Mary very soon says Goodbye and hurries off to cater for her household of what at this moment must be 20 people.

Roll up to Killadoon, folks, to live the good life!