My Life

Prof Tom Raftery

Contents

Foreword

My father, Prof Tom Raftery, was born on a small farm in the west of Ireland in 1933. His father died in early 1942 when Dad was just eight, leaving his mother alone to raise ten children, whose ages ranged from fifteen to two. That all ten children did well in later life is an amazing testiment to Granny Raftery's fortitude.

Dad managed to get a second level education, a college degree, and ultimately he became a Professor, head of his department, and vice-president of University College Cork.

In 1984 he switched career and became a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) representing Munster for Fine Gael.

Dad was involved in the purchase of Lyons Estate for UCD, and Fota Island for UCC. He was responsible for the restoration of Fota House and its world-famous arboretum, and for opening them to the public.

It was his idea, and his drive which saw the Wildlife Park established in Fota - now one of Ireland's most popular tourist destinations, and a very important centre for the breeding of endangered species.

And all the while my mother, Bredhe Raftery, was by his side, helping and encouraging his every success.

Dad wrote out his memoirs longhand, and I compiled them into this book to celebrate his life, and his achievements on the occasion of his 80th birthday, as a present from my sister Mary and I.

Tom Raftery (jnr), and Mary Buyukdura, August 2013.

Chapter 1 – Early Childhood

Death in the Night April 1942

"Hail Mary, Holy Mary, Hail Mary, Holy Mary..." The prayers came from our parents' room just under the dormer room where we slept, four to a bed, two at the head and two at the foot of the bed. "What's going on?", I asked. "Shut up and go to sleep" commanded my eldest brother, Padraic. He was always very bossy with the younger members of the family.

In the morning I was awake early, as usual. Going down the stairs I sensed unusual activity. The large clock on the wall was stopped at 3am. There was unusual sweeping, cleaning, and relations and neighbours were very active. They were all exceedingly nice to me, offering breakfast and advice to "eat up and take the dog for a walk". Nobody told be but I sensed there was something very serious afoot. My Mother was not present. It was my Godmother, Bridgie Raftery, who was also my first cousin, who broke the news to me that my father had died during the night. Neighbours kept coming and going. Aunt Delia, my father's sister, who was married to Ned Kennedy in Athenry, arrived. Delia was a very austere woman. She had no children and her husband Ned was a very nice man who liked the good life; shooting, fishing, horse racing etc. Serious work was not on his agenda and when not active in the aforementioned, he liked a few drinks. Two very different people indeed!

Delia proceeded to direct operations. Still no sign of my mother. Afterwards I learned that she had to go to Galway to procure appropriate clothes for the funeral and to collect the two eldest girls from Tailor's Hill Boarding School. She had a family of ten children: Mary, Padraic, Bridie, Margaret, Walter and myself Tom, Una and Lily, Ignatius and Joan. Mary was the eldest, almost 15 years old and Joan was the youngest, at less than 2 years of age. I was going on 8 years at the time.

My father, (also Tom Raftery) in Boston before returning to Ireland to get married c 1900

In the afternoon, Aunt Delia took us to see the corpse. I remember she lifted me up to kiss my Father. To this day, I can remember the coldness of the forehead I kissed. It was a shock which I have never forgotten.

Mother appeared dressed completely in black clothes. Later in the afternoon, a hearse arrived. It was the first hearse I had ever seen. It was followed by a big black car, a taxi. The coffin was taken out through the window and put into the hearse. We were loaded into the taxi. It was the first time I had ever been in a motorcar. People did not own motors during the war years.

As the hearse and car proceeded slowly into Athenry, I looked back to see a long line of horse traps and sidecars plus large numbers of people on bicycles. There was an eerie silence in the car. The cortege was met by a large gathering waiting at the church. The coffin was transferred into the church and prayers were said.

Raftery Family c. 1934. L-R back row my mother (later Granny Raftery!), Mary, my father (Tom); front row Bridie, Me (Tom), Margaret, Walter, & Padraic

The following day, what was known as a High Mass was celebrated. A High Mass, I was told, cost more than an ordinary Mass. For me there was far too much pomp and ceremony. Neighbours dug the grave the day before with picks and shovels. After more prayers at the grave, the same neighbours lowered the coffin into the grave and began to fill the grave. The noise of the stones and lumps of soil hitting the coffin has been etched into my brain. Unlike today, people remained until the grave was filled. Men stood in the grave, packing the soil as we stood freezing in the cold April morning. The four children younger than myself were cared for by somebody while all this was going on.

Remainder of 1942

The seed potatoes had been cut and ready for planting before the death, but the delay in planting caused some of the cut potatoes to dry out and consequently much of the crop had failed. Following on this, the lambs were not dosed, as was usual, against stomach worms and some deaths occurred and the remainder failed to thrive.

Later that year, (October, I think) the two youngest, Ignatius and Joan, got very ill one night. Mother got the two eldest out of bed to go for the doctor some time about 3am. They cycled approximately six miles to Dr. Joyce's home in Turloughmore. In those days there was no electricity in rural areas, they awakened Dr. Joyce by throwing pebbles at his upstairs window. He drove his car to our home, put the two children into his car and brought them to what was then known as the "Fever Hospital" in Galway. They had diphtheria. The youngest, Joan, had a trachea inserted in her throat to enable her to breathe. Ignatius was less ill, but they were both detained in hospital until after Christmas. By taking such quick action, Dr. Joyce certainly saved Joan's life.

The rest of us were quarantined which meant there was no school. That was great, as far as I was concerned. I hated school and I loved the freedom to go with the dog looking for rabbits. Eventually they got home from hospital after Christmas and it was back to school again for those of

us who were attending the school in Carnaughan, approximately three miles away. All in all it was a bad year, especially for my Mother. Mary and Bridie never returned to Tailor's Hill. Mary stayed to help in the home and on the farm. Bridie took up an apprenticeship in a drapery store in Galway. It was a quiet Christmas in the Raftery household.

A few years later I heard Mother tell a friend of hers about the night our Father died. He got serious chest pain and Mother asked would he like to have the priest, to which he replied, "No, I have nothing on my conscience". "Nothing on his conscience and he leaving me with ten children" she said in an angry voice. She did not know I was listening and I got out of the house quietly.

As a child I did not know what her angry comment meant. As I grew older I understood her angry comment and I wondered which of us, or how many of us, would she rather not have had.

My Father was also Tom Raftery. Irish was very commonly used where he was born in Cahirgoughan, Claregalway. He did some writing in Irish. I knew nothing about this until contacted by RTE in later life to tell me that his writing would be discussed on radio. The discussion revolved around styles of writing in Galway which varied in different parts of the country. He emigrated to the States as a young man, where he attended night school in New York and worked in the Post Office and on the trams.

Following some years when he had put money together he returned and bought a good farm at Caushla, Athenry. He married a woman from Carranmore, named Hanley. They had no family and she died relatively young. He considered returning to the States, but a friend, the matchmaker, suggested that Margaret Hughes, my Mother, would be a good match. The match was made and she had little or no say in the matter. At that time she had a boyfriend who then emigrated to New Zealand. They communicated by letter for some years afterwards. They were six or seven years married before the first child arrived and subsequently had ten children over approximately fourteen years. Shortly afterwards he died due to a heart condition. This heart problem, I was informed, was due to rheumatic fever which he got in his youth. He was just 63 years of age when he died and my Mother, who was roughly 41 years, was left to look after ten children, all under 16 years of age.

That was not unusual in Ireland at that time. I never heard the word 'widower' when growing up, but there were plenty widows in the area as a result of older men marrying younger women. Marriages were usually, or often, arranged by parents. Love was not considered. Property and money were the main factors. Some girls, of course, ran away with their lovers rather than marrying some older man at the behest of parents. Indeed my Mother's older sister ran to the U.S. with her boyfriend rather than marry an older man. Her parents never saw her again or the grandchildren of that marriage. That option was not open for Mother as she had to look after her own Mother in old age. I never knew my Grandparents, although my Mother's Mother died in our home, but I was too young to remember her.

Rural Ireland of that time was a pretty drab place with poverty and a autocratic Church, where women were very much second-class citizens, treated like property. Some Bishops behaved like dictators, but there were some good and humble bishops too, such as the Archbishop of Tuam, in our Diocese. Following the birth of a child at that time, the mother had to be 'churched', some kind of blessing or cleansing. I wondered what kind of church could treat a woman in such a fashion after giving birth, the most wonderful and important thing in the world. Indeed I often wondered why it was, that the mothers of Ireland were the ones who kept religion alive in Ireland.

Memories of my Father

Memories of my Father were few enough. I remember him returning from Galway on a September evening, very agitated, telling some farm labourers that the war had started. It must have been 1939. My eldest brother asked a workman, "What steps he would take if the Germans invaded", to which he got the instant answer: "Long ones towards the Twelve Bens", which was the largest hill in Connemara.

Because Dad had travelled, and went to night school in the U.S., he was regularly consulted on many issues, by neighbours about all sorts of issues, particularly farming issues. I remember the postman; Tom O'Reilly bought him the daily paper. He liked to be kept informed. This was before the radio arrived, of course. He particularly followed the news about the war. He was a friend of Paddy Hogan, the first Minister for Agriculture who was killed in a car accident in Aughrim near his home. Aughrim is a famous for a great battle of the past, but for little else other than the death of Paddy Hogan. Because he was a supporter of Paddy Hogan, we were often referred to in the school as 'blue shirts'. That name confused me. Many years later I learned the background to the blue shirts and the family always voted Fine Gael.

Dad bred pedigree sheep and won many prizes for sheep in the Athenry Agricultural Show. He was also a supporter of the Horace Plunkett Co-Operative Movement and was chairman of the Athenry Agricultural Co-Operative Society. For his services, the Co-Op presented him with a silver tea-set on his retirement.

Religion was very important to him. He was a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, whatever that was, and in death his body was draped in the brown habit of the Order. On Sundays he ensured that we were in church early enough to have the rosary said before the Mass started and Mass at that time went on for nearly one hour, with the priest's back to the congregation as he mumbled away in Latin. He would then enter the pulpit and give a long sermon on all kinds of sin and hell fire or purgatory.

My Mother

Mother was truly a remarkable person, with just a primary school education. I was never very close to her simply because I had the good fortune to have avoided all the usual childhood illness. When every other child got measles, I escaped. I escaped the mumps too. Through all these crises I was off out with the dog and the farm animals which I loved. Spring was my favourite time, not just because of the daffodils; no it was the birth of lambs, chickens, ducklings, goslings, turkeys, geese and the most beautiful of all, the Irish draught foal. I adored these animals and still adore them to this day.

In Spring I was always out first to see what was born during the night. I had just one

Margaret Raftery (Granny) date unknown

set-back, a nasty accident. In summer, all the children of the area and at school went in bare feet. Barefooted, I stepped backwards onto a sythe. I scarcely felt it but a workman immediately rushed forward, carried me in home with blood streaming from a very large wound. Mom O'Brien was sent for. She was a Mrs. O'Brien, a very strong willed and wise woman upon whom my Mother depended for support and advice during every crisis. Mom arrived and immediately pronounced it was a case for the doctor. A bandage was applied to stem the blood. The house trap came out and into Athenry we went at full steam, some five miles, to see Dr. Foley. He cleaned the wound with some disinfectant which stung unbearably. He then got a bent needle and proceeded to stitch while the two women held me down. Unable to get the bent needle through with his fingers, he got pliers and pushed and pulled until he got the foot back in one piece again. Having covered this with white bandage, he solemnly announced that I had come very close to cutting the main tendon in the sole of my foot which he said would have left me lame for life. He then proceeded to discuss his concerns for Rome and the Vatican – because as the Germans retreated they destroyed much of what they could no longer defend – whereupon I spoke up to say, "the Germans gave an undertaking not to bomb Rome". He looked at me approvingly saying, "You are well informed boy, but can we trust them?"

We travelled home again and from that day to this, the injury never gave me any more trouble. No doctor today would do what Dr. Foley did with his bent needle and his pliers. I would be dispatched to hospital with such an injury.

In a few weeks I was off again on the bare feet. We walked to school in bare feet, played football in bare feet, did farm work in bare feet, April to September. Shoes were only put on for going to Mass on Sundays.

Mother's Problems

Following my Father's funeral, Aunt Delia, in an attempt to help, took my sister Una who was next after me, to bring her up in Athenry. We envied Una. Aunt Delia had electricity and running water and a proper toilet. Later I discovered that Una was very angry to have been taken away, which I can now fully understand. Mother was faced with rearing the rest of us, on her own, with no relations within ten miles, no running water, no electricity, only roof water, no indoor toilets, crop and animal failures, following the funeral, followed by death threatening diphtheria which hit the two youngest, I can only wonder how she got through it all.

As if all that was not bad enough, the question of death duties arose, since my father had not completed his Will. I can still recall Mr. Sweeney, the Auctioneer and Valuer from Athenry, standing in the kitchen telling Mother that he had made arrangements to have all the life-stock taken in by the neighbours on the day when he was coming to value the farm life-stock, for death duty purposes. "Mrs. Raftery", he said, "if there are any life-stock here when I come on Thursday, I will have to value them and the neighbours are only too happy to co-operate".

Now here we had a man flouting the law, but everybody knew it, and it was in a very good cause. I understand he did his best to reduce the value of the land too.

Money

In farming, income is very season related. It is not like a job where there was a weekly or monthly cheque. Consequently, Mother had to call to the bank occasionally. The only bank in Athenry was the Ulster Bank and the Manager was a Mr. King, a very austere looking man who wore thick glasses. Mr. King, we were told, had a glass eye. Well if he had, it was a very good match! I was told a story about a chancer who went to Mr. King for a loan. Despite his reputation, he made an excellent case. The

Manager was impressed and said, "I have a glass eye and if you can tell me in five seconds which is the glass eye, I'll give you the loan". The client took a quick look and said, "It's your left eye" to which King replied: "How did you know so quickly", to which the client replied: "I could see more kindness in it". I don't know whether it was true or not, but knowing the client, I could well believe it!

Mother did not like going to see Mr. King, nor did she like the letters she got from him. Before the school year began in September each year, Mother got the horse and trap, took us to Galway to get new boots for going to school in winter. I loved the excitement of seeing the city with buses, taxies, and big shops. She always went into Logue's Shoe Shop in Eyre Square for the footwear. The smell of leather was lovely. New boots were bought for walking to school in winter. At home the new boots had studs put in the soles and upper leather was treated with dubbin or goose grease, fat from the cooked goose. I rarely got new clothes as clothes were passed down to me from my older brothers. That did not bother me one bit, as I had no interest whatever in clothes and still have no interest in clothes. On the other hand, Walter, who was 15 months older always had, and still has a huge interest in good clothes. Although very similar in physique, we are poles apart in every other way.

The War Years

During the war, although Ireland was officially neutral, we suffered in many ways. Rationing was the order of the day. Poverty was widespread. People improvised. Flour bags were used to make bed sheets. When suits got worn looking, the ladies were able to turn them inside out. Paraffin oil for our lamps was very scarce. People improvised in all sorts of ingenious ways. Fruit, other than home grown, was out of the question. I was at least 12 years old before I saw bananas and oranges, but we did have plenty apples at home. Ration cards were provided by the government to obtain a meagre ration of items like tea, sugar, flour etc.

Although officially neutral, many thousands of young Irishmen joined the British Army and very many of them died or were seriously injured. Of course the anti-British diehards sympathised with the Germans. Some of those people refused to believe that the concentration camps existed, even after the war ended. Our neutrality was a very pragmatic kind. Allied pilots who crash landed in Ireland were invariably sent home, while the Germans found in Ireland were interned in the Army camps at the Curragh in Kildare. Interned Germans were happy in Kildare and some of them subsequently married Irish girls. U.S. Army personnel who crash landed, got right royal treatment before being released to go to Northern Ireland and then on to Britain and the U.S.A.

U.S. Bomber in Athenry

One Friday afternoon, 15 January 1943, we heard the very loud noise of a plane passing over Carnaun School. Later we heard that a big plane had crash landed at the Agricultural College and it was true. On Sunday morning after Mass, I cycled to the nearby college field where I saw this monster, like a stranded whale. It had ploughed through the wall, a stone wall, at 70 miles per hour before coming to a halt in the middle of a large field. To my surprise, many soldiers were busy helping to unload and dismantle the plane. It took two men to carry each belt of bullets. Crowds were prevented from entering the field. Looking at this monster I wondered how on earth it became airborne. It was the first plane I ever saw on the ground.

During the war (we called it "the Emergency" in Ireland), we had local defence forces and Dinny the Barber was a member. On hearing the plane, Dinny rushed out on his bicycle with his blunderbuss of an old rifle. As the door of the plane opened, Dinny raised his rifle and shouted "stick 'em up". Dinny was placated with an offer of fruit

US B17 Flying Fortress on the ground after crash landing in Athenry in 1943
Photo credit http://www.eagles-over-ireland.site50.net/

and ham sandwiches. In those days Catholics were forbidden to eat meat on Friday, but Dinny said, "It was a damn good Friday to get such good sandwiches". Well, that was the story, true or false!

All those aboard were taken into the Railway Hotel where they were dined and wined after which they were conveyed, at Irish Government expense, and taken across the border into Northern Ireland.

The following is an extract from records of aircraft landing in Ireland 1939 to 1946.

The crash is very well documented online at http://www.eagles-over-ireland.site50.net/index.php/home

A few days later I saw Irish Army Personnel chopping off limbs of trees which were protruding onto the edge of the roadway. Shortly afterwards a convey of trucks brought the dismantled plane along the road on their way to Northern Ireland where it was re-assembled at Ballykelly and flown out on its original mission. It landed in Athenry only because it had lost its way and had run low in fuel. The fields of the College were the largest and most suitable for an emergency landing.

On the 6th December 2003 the U.S. Ambassador in Ireland planted a tree and unveiled a plaque at the actual crash site to commemorate the historic crash landing in Athenry. Survivors of the crash went on to have a huge impact on the outcome of the war.

Special Events During the Year

The Stations

This was where Mass was celebrated in somebody's home, different homes each year. In our home it was once in every eleven years. For the stations the house would be done up, washed, painted, garden planted etc. The Priest would hear confessions and then celebrate Mass, always in the kitchen in our home. Neighbours would attend the Mass. After Mass the Priest and some near neighbours would have breakfast first and then the men would retire to the out houses where they would be supplied with whatever alcoholic drinks were available. The best tablecloth and table ware would be laid out for the Priest and usually a good fry. Mustard was a relatively new product at that time. As an altar boy I loved serving at the stations. I got off from going to school and got a good fry and usually a few shillings from the house. One morning while waiting for breakfast the Priest put a spoon of his own mustard on the edge of the plate. The woman who was serving never saw mustard before and quick as a flash she wiped the mustard off with her apron, apologising for "those bloody hens who were everywhere"!

Sandwiches would be supplied to the men who were enjoying an early drink in the outhouses. Invariably it was a good social

affair, ending with dancing that night in the kitchen and kitchens were usually big in farmhouses.

Galway Races

Galway Races were held on Wednesday and Thursday of the last week of July each year. Now there's a whole week of partying, plus racing in September on the Galway Racecourse. Our home was about 6.5 miles from the racecourse. Most people went to the races, not so much for the racing as the social outing and excitement. Horse traps and side cars and bicycles were the most common form of transport as there were very few motorcars, before the early 50's, except for the wealthy from Dublin and elsewhere. Every kind of chancer converged on the races, even before the Fianna Fáil tent! The three card trick and roulette table, and of course selling tips, were all there. The idea of selling tips always amused me. If they knew the horses that were going to win, why were they not in the bookies enclosure instead of selling tips at the entrance gates. But people bought the tips. I usually went to the car park to admire the latest and largest cars, usually U.S. made cars with white-walled tyres and lashings of chrome. That's what I admired most. Much later I was to learn they were gas-guzzlers and unreliable vehicles for which there were no spare parts readily available. The attraction of the races wore off early, especially when I found I could make more money operating a tractor for neighbours for two days.

Sheep Shearing

Sheep shearing was usually in early May. The sheep were driven to the Clare River, three miles away where they were immersed in the flowing river to take some of the grit and other items out of the wool. Some days later neighbours would come in to help with the shearing, with hand shears of course, long before the electric shears. Each fleece was then rolled up and the fleeces put into a big jute sack called a 'wool sack' and sold by weight to the local merchant. Mother always bought some wool to the woollen mills in Galway where they spun it into thick woollen thread. She was never idle. When sitting down to rest she was knitting this thread. I still have woollen socks, which I use when wearing wellington boots which she knitted for me over forty years ago. Even to this day, there is no synthetic fibre to match the versatility of good wool. Girls were taught knitting in the national school, at that time.

The Threshing

Before the arrival of the combine harvester, the cereal crops were cut and bound into sheaves, sometimes by hand, but increasingly by the binder; a machine that cut the crop and automatically bound the sheaves with binder twine. The sheaves would then be put standing in what were called 'stooks' and left there for some time to dry out, before being brought into a haggard where they were stacked or put into long reeks. The threshing machine was hauled from farmyard to farmyard by tractor where sheaves were cut and fed into the threshing machine to separate the grain from the straw and the chaff. Neighbours co-operated and helped each other for the threshing. It was not unusual to have some bottles of stout to slake their thirst. They were, of course, supplied with lunch, usually bacon and cabbage and boiled potatoes,

the best of food in my view. It was a great social occasion where much news and stories and arguments about local matches took place. The arrival of the combine harvester which cut, thrashed and bagged the grain, finished all that.

Killing the Pig

Every farmer reared a pig to be killed for meat for the family. Neighbours would help. Paddy Burke was an expert at the quick kill, after the pig was restrained on his back, usually on a horse cart, and the blood was collected carefully to make black puddings. The carcass was hung by its legs and the intestines removed. The small intestine was removed carefully and cleaned thoroughly to be used for the making of

the pudding. The blood was mixed with oatmeal and spices and poured into the long small intestine which was then boiled. The dead carcass was washed thoroughly and shaved of all bristle, using very sharp knives. It was then cut into smaller pieces and salted thoroughly with rough salt before being placed in a larger wooden wine barrel. The cut meat was then weighted down in the barrel with some heavy objects as the salt melted, brine would gradually rise in the barrel. Of course, some fresh cuts and the liver were taken off first for immediate or short-term use and kept in a cool spot. There were no fridges then because we had no electricity. The pig's head was boiled and whatever meat was on it cut off. I loved the fresh black pudding and the fresh pork chops and the liver and never liked the pig's head or the crubeens (pig's trotters) which were also cut off before the remains of the carcass went into the barrel. A meal of bacon and cabbage with Golden Wonder or Kerr's Pink potatoes and plenty of homemade butter and fresh buttermilk was a meal fit for a king. In today's world it is difficult or impossible to get such a wholesome meal. The homemade butter was made by skimming off the cream using a separator. The cream was then allowed to stand to ferment before churning with a hand-operated churn until the fat coagulated. The butter fat was then salted and the buttermilk consumed at lunch time.

Of course there were many other unusual events during the year such as the religious processions in May in Athenry, climbing Croke Patrick in the last Sunday in July, a visit to the blessed well in Athenry on the 15 August (my birthday), following the hunt, the Galway Blazers, in winter time. People tried to make the best of a very bad time, a time when there was wholesale unemployment, when De Valera was talking about "comely maidens dancing at the crossroads", and fanatical priests were out beating courting couples out of the bushes, and all the time there was mass emigration caused by the crazy protectionist policies adopted at home. In truth, we were a very tolerant people who did not rise up against political nonsense in the name of patriotism and some fanatical church leaders who kept us in ignorance by blocking the raising of the school leaving age.

The Mission

In spring each year we had what was referred to as 'the mission'. Missionary priests, invariably Redemptorists, would come to celebrate Mass each morning for a whole week and to give fiery sermons, about sin, usually the sin of impurity (ie. sex). There seemed to be no other sin; no mention of corruption or terrible poverty which existed; no mention of wife beating which existed; or fraud. It seemed to me as a child there was only one sin, sex. Subsequently I was reliably informed that women were asked in confession how many children they had and were they going to have more. If the woman or man said "no", the priest said he could not sleep in the same bed as his spouse. My mother had ten children when my father died. My eldest sister had twelve children, the youngest just three when her husband died. My sister Margaret had fourteen children and the youngest just ten years when she died. My sister Bridie in America had six children when her husband left home to pray and fast in the desert. He died a hermit. I was not aware of any special help for these unfortunate spouses from the Redemptorists Order, or any bishop during their misfortune. Condoms were, of course illegal here (holy Ireland), at the behest of the Church.

While all these good sermons were going on, the hawkers had stalls outside the church selling various religious objects. What did the Lord say about traders in the Temple? Well the traders were doing well outside the temple after a few hell fire and damnation sermons.

Large Families

Now you may have got the impression that our family was unique, producing such large families, but you would be wrong.

Within two miles of my home there were three much larger families than any of our family produced. Roughly half of a mile away, there lived Peter Mullins. I bought some poitín from Peter regularly. My wife Bredhe, firmly believed that poitín gave much better flavour in Christmas cakes and puddings and she was acknowledged as an outstanding cook. I asked Peter about all of the brothers and sisters, all twenty-two of them. Peter admitted he never met some of his older siblings. They were already in the U.S.A., before he was born. He also informed me that a number of his nephews and nieces were older than himself, as he was the youngest of twenty-three. His older brothers and sisters in the U.S., were already married and had their children before he was born. That was a new one for me to digest! He owned a small farm and supplemented the farm income by making and selling poitín. In all sincerity, he offered to give me a much better deal if I would take five gallons instead of the usual bottle or two. Needless to say I declined that offer.

"Did the Gardaí ever call to you, Peter, I enquired. "Just once", he said. "And what did they do", I asked.

"They drove very slowly up the side road there in full view of the local pub. They then stopped for a while out at the entrance gate, and after some time a Garda got out of the car, put on his cap and walked slowly in the lane to the yard where we are now", said Peter. "We then had a friendly chat about various things, including the weather, the matches, etc. Suddenly the sheep dog arrived. He enquired if I had a licence for the dog", said Peter. "On telling him that I had not, he produced a document, a summons for not having the dog licensed, and then he went back to the Garda car and moved on".

"What was all that activity about", I enquired.

"Well", said Peter, "they were seen to be doing their duty in full view of the neighbours, especially the pub owner".

"Tell me, Peter" I said, "Did you give them some poitín?"

"Only at Christmas", he replied, "Just a few bottles".

"Not a bad deal I suppose", I thought.

Further up the road there was Kelly family, a very large family. The Mother, Cáit, was from Connemara which was very evident from her accent. Cáit was a small woman with a large family, nineteen. But I understand one died very young, leaving only just eighteen and she had several miscarriages I was told by my elder sister Mary. They had a very small farm, but Cáit was a very hard working and resourceful woman. Her husband was rather less active – except in bed of course!

Many of the children were in the national school with me. They were mannerly children but clearly very poor but also clearly they were not malnourished. That was in the mid 40's. In the 80's Bredhe and I were visiting our daughter and her family in Boca Raton, in Florida. Mary told me she met a lovely woman who told her that she was in school with me and she would like to meet me some time. Mary drove us up to see her. She had a beautiful home, with the usual pool, of course, and evidence of relative wealth was everywhere to be seen. She was a very handsome woman. Her husband was an airline pilot and as I remember it, she too worked in the airline, perhaps as a hostess. She was one of Cáit's many daughters. We had a lovely evening with her and she told me about all the other members who were in the USA. A brother at home in Ireland was killed, in some kind of accident with a horse. Other members of the family were in the New York area.

Some years later the Cork Examiner had a front page photograph of Martin Kelly from Athenry "Hero of the twin towers tragedy". It transpired that Martin was Cáit's son. Martin was in charge in an office mid way in the towers when the plane crashed into the upper deck. When he was asked

how he escaped, he explained that he disobeyed orders. The order came over the tannoy to "stay at your stations", but Martin shouted "fuck that, everybody out immediately and use the stairs", Martin and some of his family, plus all the others in the office, escaped. However, it was hours before he could find them as the cell phones went dead. Eventually they were all reunited and Martin became a here amongst the Irish in New York and the neighbours and friends in Athenry. No doubt, Cáit was proud of him.

With her husband dead and her family away, Cáit still dabbled in farming. She had a small herd of Friesian cows and won a number of prizes in the agricultural show in Athenry. I can remember a photograph in the Farmers Journal, of my brother Padraic, who was chairman of the Mart, presenting her with the cup for the best Friesian cow at the show. She went into Athenry each week to draw her old age pension. She then went to the bookies shop to place a little bet on the horses and from there she went to the Athenry new Park Hotel which was owned by one of my many nieces, to have a good lunch for herself. Cáit died at an advanced age in relative comfort. The family were good to her and she certainly deserved everything she got.

All over Ireland there were women who made huge sacrifices to cater for their large families and in most cases they were widows as they married men who were much older and the male lifespan is shorter than the female lifespan. The widows of Ireland were the real heroes or heroines of Ireland, in my opinion.

The Clergy

Despite my earlier criticism of the Church, there were and are many excellent people among priests, nuns and brothers. As we now know there was in a minority of cases, both physical and sexual abuse of children and a considerable number of bullies amongst them. Most Bishops acted like dictators over every aspect of our lives. We were forbidden to enter churches other than Catholic churches.

When I moved to Cork in 1964 I got to know one of the most successful farmers in East Cork, Bill Tait. It was a pleasure to visit Bill and his with Edna. Bill was a very proud of his farming and he had every right to be. And he was also one of the most popular and admired people in that area. Bill got a stroke. I went to see him. It was one of the most distressful few hours I can remember. He got his son to drive around the farm, to show me everything as usual. However, I could scarcely understand a word he was saying. It was very upsetting, seeing him struggling to tell me something or other. I left, never to see him alive again. His funeral was in a small Church of Ireland church in East Cork. As I approached the church there was a large crowd, mostly local farmers, his real friends, outside. Having waded my way into the church, it was less than half full. His Catholic friends, of which there were many, would not go into a Protestant church because of Catholic teaching at that time.

Several years later, after a flight from the U.S., Bredhe and I landed in Shannon where I saw the death notice of a Mr. John Smith who had died and was being buried after a service in St. Luke's Protestant church on that day. As we had been friendly with John and his wife, we decided to go straight to the church before going home. John was a Church of Ireland member. During the service, Canon Salter, a man who loved the Irish language and a man for whom I have great respect, invited all faiths to partake in communion. With hesitation Bredhe, who was more diligent about her religion than I was, just said, "Come on up", and up we went to receive the blessed bread. Coming back from the alter I saw a stream of Catholics heading towards the altar. That was the day I felt, Ireland was growing up and coming to its senses. Apart from those going to the priesthood, the nuns or brothers, less than 10% went on to third level.

My Problems with the Catholic Church in Ireland

As a child and young boy I asked myself questions about the clergy, such as: *Why were priests not allowed to marry? Did not Jesus select married men as his disciples? Why, if we had married clergy up to the 13th century was the rule of celibacy introduced?*

I was afraid to ask these questions because in those days, the clergy were always 'infallible' in people's eyes. The practice of reading out the dues or stipends which humiliated the poor was, in my view, cruel. And on the other hand we were told God loves the poor. Why were athletic young men banned from playing games after ordination? I remember Kevin Heffernan, the legendary Dublin corner-forward saying one of the best corner-backs he ever encountered was John Kennedy from Tuam. I saw John Kennedy playing, and he was outstanding. Immediately after ordination his playing career ended. In a Galway County final I saw one of the finest mid-field displays that I have ever seen from Peter Tierney. Immediately after his ordination, his football career ended. His younger brother, Noel subsequently won three all-Ireland football medals playing full-back for Galway. Fr. Peter must have been proud of him, but he must also have regretted that the Church banned him from playing. There was one priest, however, who played centre-field for Galway hurling team and for Blackrock Hurling Club in Cork. He was Fr. Gantley, but he played under an assumed name of Paddy Gardner. Virtually everybody knew he was a priest, some of the Church authorities must have known. What kind of double-standards did the Church have? Secretly, the public were delighted at the courage Fr. Gantley had shown by defying man-made laws of the Bishops in Ireland. In the eighties, the rule was changed and Fr. Iggy Clarke played for Galway in an All Ireland Final.

Ireland of the Forties and Fifties

In Ireland of the forties and fifties, rural born children did not, by and large, go to secondary school, and the school leaving age was fourteen. According to Mr. Tom Garvan of UCD in his book 'Preventing the Future', every effort was made to a succession of Ministers for Education including the late President Hillary, to raise the school leaving age, were frustrated by three people; Eamonn De Valera, Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin and Bishop Browne of Galway. Higher levels of education were only for those going to join the clergy or teaching and of course the small cohort for medicine etc., according to those three individuals.

My late wife's eldest brother, Bill Bennett, was ordained in St. Kieran's and a photograph shows that 32 young men were ordained in St. Kieran's on that day. The same was true in other seminaries, especially Maynooth. The majority of these fine young men were expected to convert the world to the Irish version of Catholicism, where women were definitely second class citizens in the eyes of the church leaders.

A colleague from Carnaun School was ordained in St. Peter's in Wexford and went to serve in Glasgow without any advice on how to deal with the local Scots. He told me he went to see nominal Catholics who were by and large non-practising Catholics. His first visit really confused him. He asked if they were Catholics and they assured him they were.

He enquired, "Are you practising Catholics?"

"Ah yes, Father, we go all the matches, even the away matches!"

"But do you go to Mass?", he asked, to which he got the reply:

"Gee, we're not fanatics, Father".

My brother-in-law, Father Bill Bennett was sent, without help or advice to a Parish in Pelaw near Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Many years later I was visiting Newcastle-Upon-Tyne University on business and I went

to visit Fr. Bill at the weekend. "Would you like to come to a soccer match on Saturday afternoon?" he enquired. Being an admirer of most sports, I was delighted to get a chance of seeing two professional soccer teams in action. Six or seven, including Fr. Bill and myself, piled into this old wagon and off we went to the match. There was only one name I was familiar with in the match 'McDonnell' or 'Supermac' as he was known in Newcastle. Supermac scored a super goal and Newcastle won and great celebrations followed. His friends were really nice fellows and greeted me with the warmest of welcomes. On arriving home to Fr. Bill's apartment, I enquired if his friends were his parishioners. "Not at all", he said, "They're not Catholics, they're just good friends from the local area. They bring me to all the matches", he said, "and we have great craic".

This was from an Irishman who played minor for Kilkenny and was reared like the rest of us to have little to do with non-Catholics, especially English Protestants. Subsequently, to celebrate his ordination 40 years earlier, he was presented with a new Renault car. All of the people in the area, Catholic, Protestant and non believers contributed, and a big party was organised to which his mother and other family members including Bredhe, my wife, were invited and where they were warmly received by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The anti-British, anti-Protestantism we were reared with, was wrong and definitely very damaging, in my view. Of course, the very "upper class" English might well have been different, but these "working class people", many of them coal miners, were very fine and kind people.

Sex Education

For those of us on farms who saw animals copulating, giving birth and rearing offspring, we pretty much know that humans were basically the same with one exception. No sex before marriage. For a girl to get pregnant before marriage was bad enough, but to give birth unmarried ruined the girl's life while the man responsible went "scot free", unless of course the girl's brother/s took the law into his own hands, and some did. Most unmarried mothers were put into what were known as 'Magdalene Laundries', where we now know they were treated appallingly, abandoned by their parents and their baby taken from them. I was told of cases where girl's brothers snatched a boy or a man who made their sister pregnant and forced him to marry the girl. In one case, I was informed that a pregnant girl's brothers snatched a man who was cutting turf, rushed him to the church where the priest married the couple just before the girl went into the nursing home to give birth. Well that was our 'Ireland of Saints and Scholars', but if you believe that the Ireland of Saints and Scholars ever existed, you'd believe anything!

Of course, condoms were banned. For some reason they were referred to in Ireland as 'french letters'. They were banned, at the behest of the Catholic Bishops who seemed hell bent on raising more children for the church, but little thought for the health of mothers who were pregnant year after year and the dire hardship and poverty that followed.

Athenry

Athenry is a very historic little town where nothing much happened during my growing-up years apart from the crash landing of the Air Force plane on January 15th 1943. The town is a walled town. Prof. Etienne Rynne of University College Galway has written as follows:

"The walls of Athenry are easily the finest medieval town walls remaining in Ireland. Only one of the five town gates now remain, the north gate. Most of the walls still stand together with five other wall towers. The walls, towers and moat were built to provide protection and to lend status to the town".

The walls are indeed very attractive and one of the best views of the wall is blocked

out by the erection of a grain and fertiliser stores, by the Athenry Agricultural Co-Operative Society of which my brother Padraic was founder, member and chairman. The real culprit however, for this foolish erection was the individual who gave planning permission.

Antoine Ó Raifteirí (Anthony Raftery), the blind poet, was born in Mayo in 1779, but he spent most of his life in the Athenry area where the locals were more generous to him than his neighbours in Mayo. He had a good friend, Thomas Daly in Coshla, a musician who lived approximately 1.5 miles from our home in Coshla but that was before my father bought the farm where I was born. Raftery regularly stayed with Tom Daly. Approximately fifteen years ago I visited the poet's grave which is not far from the little town of Croughwell in Galway. I was shocked and saddened to see his grave overgrown with weeds, totally neglected and no sign to indicate where to find his grave. Fortunately that has been rectified, in recent times.

Athenry in my youth was a town of approximately one thousand people with roughly twenty shops, all licensed to sell alcoholic drinks. Ladies of course, were never seen drinking or smoking. I remember as a young boy going into a shop to get to a toilet. On opening a door which I thought was into a toilet, I saw a group of elderly ladies with drinks on the table and a few of them smoking clay pipes. I retreated rapidly and was reprimanded by the barman for going into 'the snug'. Of course I could not mention that at home, but I did learn later that the snug was a common feature in pubs in those days. As late as 1986 I saw a functioning snug in Mallow in County Cork. It must have been the last snug in Ireland!

As there were no livestock marts then, fairs were held on the streets of the town, which resulted in dung and urine on the streets outside shop doors and residence doors. I cannot recall any objections to this practice, which occurred once per month. Perhaps this was because it brought money to the town.

In the 1950's my brother Padraic started a move to have a co-operative mart for the sale and purchase of livestock. The cattle buyers of course and some other business people of Athenry objected strongly. Bur farmers who sold livestock once or twice a year were not as well informed as the buyers who were buying and selling every day. Farmers had no way of knowing the value of their livestock. Following the opening of the mart, cattle were weighed, the weight shown on large screens and the buyers had to bid openly against each other. Prices at marts all over the country were communicated to Michael Dillon, who in turn transmitted the prices through his radio and after 1960 through TV slots, thus making farmers aware of the value of their livestock, which was particularly useful for them. Subsequently, meat factories advertised their prices and some farmers brought their stock directly to the meat plants.

Modern Athenry

Having left Athenry in the 1950's, I can now see the marvellous progress the town has made in sport, business and tourism. In my youth, Athenry could not field a good hurling team. Some years later it had the best hurling club in Ireland, winning the All Ireland Club Final in three years out of four; 1997, 2000 and 2001. Business too thrived with new shopping centres, new hotels, new schools, new factories, a new golf club and of course a huge increase in population.

The name 'Athenry' is made famous by the song 'The Fields of Athenry'. People all over Europe, who have no idea where Athenry is, sing this song at soccer matches throughout Europe and beyond.

Mother's Concerns

Given the kind of Ireland, I can understand why my mother was so strict with her daughters, particularly with randy

young farm workers around the farmyard. I remember her coming down from town one evening on her bicycle and heading straight to the farm buildings where I could hear loud shouting and mother telling the farm worker to "go and never come back". An appropriate physical punishment was meted out to the daughter in the presence of most of the family. It that was not bad enough, a long-time live-in worker came home from the pub late one night and tried to force his way into her bedroom. In the morning I could hear her shouting at this man to "get out and find a job elsewhere". We had no idea why she told this man to get out. He was a reliable and competent worker. It was years later I learned what really happened. What an amazingly strong woman in the face of all kinds of adversity! Further hurt was caused to her by a neighbour taking the man as a worker, despite knowing what he had tried to do in mother's house.

My eldest sister Mary, now had a boyfriend Joe O'Brien, son of Mom O'Brien and that was very acceptable to mother. Mary had become a very competent woman, both inside and outside on the farm. She was an excellent cook, dressmaker, farm worker, and pretty good at keeping the rest of the family in line. She was, and is, a very strong person.

Social Life

The social life in the 40's and early 50's was very limited, especially for mothers. Men, young and old, went to hurling matches, to livestock fairs and very many of them to the pub, more for conservation than for serious drinking. They also visited houses for card games, especially coming up to Christmas when they played for turkeys and geese. Women and girls organised dances in the homes and at the crossroads, much to the annoyance of some paranoid or jealous parish priests. Overall, it was a bleak period with De Valera preaching nonsense about the economy and 'comely maidens dancing at the crossroads', while some of our brightest and most enterprising, plus the unskilled, including those from the Gaeltacht who could scarcely speak a word of English, took the boat to Liverpool or Glasgow or the USA. Before departing for the USA, there was usual a party, known as 'the American wake', as parents never expected to see their sons or daughters again. The American wake consisted of drinking, singing, dancing and crying.

Farming in the Forties and Fifties

Like every other farm at that time, we had a whole variety of crops; potatoes, wheat, oats, barley, sugar beet, mangles, turnips, and in the house garden, vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, onions, peas etc., were grown. Specialisation had not yet arrived. Livestock too were very diverse. Sheep were the main source of livestock income in our area. I knew every ewe on our farm by her facial features, just as I would recognise humans. For the ewes we purchased a ram in the autumn to get the ewes in lamb. On the other hand, all other livestock, such as mares, hens, turkeys, sows, were bought to farms where they had the appropriate males to copulate with them, and a fee would have to be paid for the male service.

Regularly I had to take a cow at the appropriate time to a farmer who kept a bull which was licensed by the Department of Agriculture, and likewise take the sow to a licensed boar, and pay for the service. My sisters would take the turkey hens to a farm which had a cock for hire.

In the late 40's and early 50's when the pig herd was increased and cow numbers increased, we had our own boar and our own bull. These could be very dangerous animals. A boar attacked Patrick Lander, a farm worker, after Patrick gave him a kick. Luckily Patrick was thrown by the boar under a house cart where he could escape further attack, but he had a significant cut on his leg from the tusk of the boar. On two separate occasions my brothers Padraic and Ignatius were attached by Frie-

sian bulls and were lucky to escape alive. Padraic escaped likely as he was thrown over a concrete wall and protected from further attach. Ignatius was attacked in a field on a farm he managed in Clare. Luckily the ground was wet and the bull failed to pin him down, but he did however do some permanent damage to his shoulder, pushing him around on the wet grass as he lay on the ground. He had a miraculous escape with his life.

It always amazes me how casual farmers can be with bulls. Following the funeral of a Mr. John Sheehy, of ACC, who was killed by a neighbour's bull many years later. I talked with some farmers outside the funeral home. The general tone was that such an event was very rare. Look lads, I said "do you not read the daily papers? Several farmers are killed each year by their own bulls". It had little effect on their thinking. Approximately six months later I met one of them, a dairy farmer, walking with the aid of a crutch. "What happened to you Dennis"? I enquired. "Tom", he said "I thought of you often and what you said at John Sheehy's funeral, many times since". "A bull that I had reared from birth attacked me in the cubicle house and only for the cubicle bars he would certainly have killed me". Yes farms can be very dangerous, especially where bulls and machinery are concerned. Familiarity breeds contempt.

Electric Fencing

In our home area, land was divided by stone walls. It was a shallow, limestone area and stone was readily available. The arrival of the electric fence was a great help in restraining livestock. The first electric fence was powered by batteries. The fence operated on a high voltage, but low current, in on and off phases. We got the first electric fence in the area. It was a simple, inexpensive and very effective piece of equipment. By attaching it to one single strand of wire, it would restrain livestock very successfully, including bulls.

On seeing it in action, Patrick Larner, a farm labourer went home and told his family about this single wire which could restrain all livestock, even bulls. On hearing this, his eldest son, of about 12 years, got on to his father's bicycle to see the fence and examine it himself. Not knowing anything about electricity, he assumed that the wire was hot to restrain the animals. To check the heat he dribbled a spit from his tongue onto the fence, but the dribble had not left his tongue completely, when the electric pulse went through the wire onto his tongue. The shock caused him to clamp his teeth on his tongue, thereby almost severing the tip of his tongue. He ended up in hospital, lucky not to have bitten off the top of his tongue completely and of course, his colleagues enjoyed teasing him about biting his tongue off. That would have been in the late 40's or early 50's.

When the electric fence unit was not in use, Ignatius and I decided to have some fun with it. We got a nice fresh bone from a freshly killed pig, and attached it to a long piece of thin flexible wire. A young dog enjoyed chewing the bone. The wire was attached to the electric fence unit and as the dog was really enjoying himself, I switched on the unit. The young dog jumped off the ground giving a loud yelp and running away. He then stopped and began to bark at the bone. We detached the unit, but left the bone in situ. When trying to get back into the farm kitchen, he kept as far away, as possible against the wall and ran as fast as he could into the kitchen and under the table. Mother was wondering about the strange behaviour or the young dog, which she liked so much. We put on a good act of wondering too, as we petted the little dog.

Some years later, when I had started to go to dances, I went to a dance, in a marquee in Athenry. There were mobile toilets for the ladies outside, but men urinated against a wire mesh at the back of the tent. Again, I saw an opportunity for some fun. I took the fencing unit from the boot of the car and placed it some twenty to thirty yards from the fence, concealed under

some grass. During the interval when there was a line of young men urinating against the fence, I switched on the unit, which resulted in all sorts of screams. Then I removed the unit and put it into the car boot. The victims of this cruel joke were easily recognised in the marquee subsequently, as their trousers were wet. I know I should not have done that, and I now hereby offer my sincere apology to all my victims.

Roughly forty years later, a man in the midlands, had a problem with men getting into dances free, by coming through a wire fence he had erected. In frustration, he did something very stupid. He attached the fence directly to the mains electricity, which resulted in some fatal consequences. Obviously he had never heard of the electric fence unit. It was a very tragic case.

Chapter 2 – Primary education

The National School in Carnaun

On my first day there was a big welcome from the Master, Mr. Tim O'Regan. He was standing at the school gate (waiting just to welcome me I foolishly thought), looking every inch the master with his well groomed appearance and steel rimmed glasses. I was escorted to the classroom and introduced to Miss O'Regan (the Master's sister), who put me sitting in a small seat beside my brother, Walter, who was 15 months older but he also started school on the same day. There were other beginners also on that day, resulting in lots of confusion and a few tears.

The excitement about going to school soon gave way to very different feelings. Being confined for so many hours in a classroom each day, when I could be doing more exciting things at home, was time wasted, I felt. In a word, school to me was a kind of prison and it was to get worse. It was bad enough to be confined in school, but when I got older and was expected to spend much of my time at home doing school homework, it was the last straw. Needless to say, I was neither a good nor a willing student at Carnaun. My interest in learning was rather a late vocation, but that was certainly not the fault of the Master, who did his best for me but, as they say, "you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink".

It was a simple and relatively new school with just two large rooms, each with a fireplace and one small room, no toilets, and no drinking water. Dry toilets were in a separate little building, used by both the children and the teachers – again no water for hand washing. At the back of the school there was an upright galvanised container-open topped. Roof water was collected in this tank and there was a tap near the bottom. If you were courageous, you might drink it – very few did.

In addition to reading, writing and maths etc., the teachers prepared students for First Holy Communion and Confirmation. We had to give our age for Confirmation and that was when I learned the date of my birthday – 15th August 1933. I was delighted that it was August 15th as that was a special day in Athenry, visiting the Holy Well and various festivities. Birthdays were not celebrated then – too many children and too little money. It was a serious and sacred sacrament then. Now it's more of a fashion-show and money collection exercise by the children. Stretched limos, hair do's, and sun-tans for the 'little queens' and the boys complete as to who would get most money from foolish adults.

Girls in the National School were also introduced to knitting. My mother had notes from her schooldays where they were also taught gardening and butter making. Her notes and handwriting were a whole lot better than my effort.

The Lunch Break in the National School

During the lunch break, girls went to a smaller area, where there was a small shelter and seating. Boys went to the larger area where there was no shelter or seats. My brothers and sisters and I always had milk in glass bottles which were washed each evening. Most children, but not all had some form of lunch.

After consuming the lunch, the boys played football, no goal posts or crossbars, just two large stones where the goalposts should be, so there was plenty disputes as to whether or not it was a goal or a point. The match was always between Castlelambert and Cussane and there was no specific numbers on each team. The disputes which arose as to whether the score was a goal or a point rarely came to fisticuffs. Going to school there was no time wasting. Going home, however, was more interesting. We searched fields for wild mushrooms, which have a unique flavour, infinitely better than the cultivated varieties. We searched too for wild strawberries and blackberries and occasionally we stole

a few apples, despite the fact that we had two orchards at home. We took time to goad Coffey's bull into a rage by throwing objects at him from the safety on top of a large stone wall. After school we would have a good dinner, usually bacon, cabbage and boiled potatoes, all home grown and fresh. After dinner the boys had work to do, cleaning out the cowshed and putting in fresh straw, feeding the pigs, calves etc. In winter, feeding the animals before school was very difficult, with just the light of the storm lantern. School homework, essays, mathematics, etc., very often with just the aid of candle light, as oil, just like most commodities was rationed, was very difficult.

Barefeet

Strange as it may seem now, we actually looked forward to discarding the boots for the summer months. In fact, we often started in April by taking them off after leaving school and putting them on before reaching home. All this was despite the lack of smooth tarred roads and plenty of stones in the playground where we played football in our barefeet. It was no great sacrifice-we loved the freedom of discarding the heavy boots. Of course, we had casualties-stone bruised toes or thorn pricks, and nettle stings etc., but it was worth it we felt.

There was plenty of fun on the way home from school. We occasionally taunted Coffey's bull by throwing stones at him from the safe vantage point of a high wall, until the animal was in a terrible temper, roaring and rooting the ground.

Occasionally too we would change the route home, to rob an orchard or to visit Dick Williams' forge, where we watched in awe as the red hot horseshoe was applied to the hoof sending a pungent cloud of smoke upwards to the ceiling.

If the smith was in a good mood we might be allowed to blow the bellows and admire the sparks flying as the long handle of the bellows, topped with a cows horn, was pulled downward.

Carnaun National School class c 1940. Note the barefeet

In summer, we detoured to pick wild strawberries, especially in Morrissey's wood, which we ate on the spot, or to pick wild

mushrooms which we put on a string in the form of a necklace, and brought home to be cooked on the top of a Stanley range with a liberal supply of salt. To this day, I can remember the flavour of these wild mushrooms cooked on the Stanley-a flavour unique and unequalled, I believe.

We hurled too along the road, somewhat in the style of Fionn McCool, with crooked sticks improvising for hurleys and stones for a ball, when we had not got a ball. Stones were plentiful on the roads since the roads were not yet tarred and the stone crusher with its big hissing steam engine was a regular visitor.

We watched in awe as the crusher smashed big stones into little stones, which were then used for repairing the road.

Looking back now, I often think what a miracle it was that we had no serious injury with stones (although I have a few marks to show from stone cuts), as we hurled them, threw them and made both slings and catapults to enable us to launch stones further. All of this, needless to say, was unknown to the Master or our parents.

Other occasional attractions going to and from school were the corn-threshing or the hunt (Galway Blazers), or the farmers mowing the hay or cutting the corn or shearing the sheep. Occasionally too, I might be brought to the cattle and sheep fair in Athenry. This was very exciting (even if it meant getting up at 3.00 a.m.) and made me feel very important - far better than going to school, especially if the homework was not done.

The seasons

Winter was the hardest time. Getting up in the dark was bad enough, but without electricity, central heating and carpets, it was much worse. The first shock was the cold linoleum on barefect on getting out of bed. Then a candle had to be found for light and the fire had to be kindled to boil the kettle to make the breakfast. It all took so long that one had to be up very early. The only merit winter had was that we made ice slides when it was frosty and we had no school when it snowed, and during the long winter nights we listened, around the fire, to the story tellers. Spring and Autumn were better but Summer was the best of all. Going to school in Winter was less exciting and there was less time to play coming home.

The Travelling Shop

A lorry called once per week to farm homes with provisions for the house, flour, tea, salt etc., and in turn the travelling shop would buy fresh eggs or chickens, dead or alive. It was a very valuable service, for people who were miles from shops and no means of transport, other than the bicycle. Some forty years later I came across a very amusing story about the travelling shop. It happened as follows:

> *A young attendant in the European Parliament named Francis Jacob whose mother was an Italian Catholic and his father was an English Jew, asked for my advice. Francis was a very polite and very helpful attendant in the Christian Democrats Office, in the EU Offices. In the spring of 1985 Francis asked my opinion about a walking holiday in North Mayo for his Easter holiday. I assured him that it was a very beautiful area and that the people would be very helpful. After Easter I met Francis and asked how he got on in Mayo. "Everything was excellent said Francis, but I was in this small town and I wished to send local post cards to my friends in the Parliament, but could not find a shop, so I approached this old lady and enquired if there was any stationery shop in town and she replied, "Oh no sir, all we have here is the travelling shop" So I gave the history of the travelling shop to Francis, to his amusement. Personally, I was very surprised that travelling shops were still functioning, but there were*

still some very remote areas in the North Mayo area and no doubt the travelling shop was giving a useful service for those who had no transport of their own and no public transport.

During the war years, the travelling shop was a life line, in our area, and I suspect in most rural areas at that time and for many years after the war, before people owned their own cars.

Back to my Old School

I returned there recently to see the old school and was pleased to see that it had been expanded and had a basket-ball area. In my time, I just accepted the situation as normal. There were just two rooms each room had a fire place, and much of the fuel was turf, carried from their homes by children to keep the rooms warm. There were just two teachers, the Master Mr. Tim O'Regan and his sister Babs.

How on earth they controlled and taught all the classes of various ages in Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography, reading and writing, I wondered? Additionally, the girls were taught knitting. Some boys, including myself, were prepared for serving mass, in Latin, not knowing what all this mumbo-jumbo meant. You just learned it off by heart and said it in the right place and time. After some years we got a third teacher, a Miss Keane. Everything was taught through the medium of Irish, with the exception of English and the Latin for serving Mass.

In my mother's time, in a different school, they were also taught gardening, in the school garden, through the medium of English. Today, teachers, parents and pupils are complaining about conditions that are infinitely better, though not perfect, than what we had in the forties.

I should also add that despite our conditions at home, we were much better off, in a material sense, than most of our neighbours who were much poorer.

During those years, there was a great sense of sharing; neighbours helped each other, in a way that has long since disappeared with the coming of wealth and materialism.

1947 – The Big Freeze

In January 1947 the threshing contractor arrived at home. It was not the usual contractor, Jimmy Burke. These were Glynn brothers from near Ballinasloe, thirty miles away. In additional to the tractor and threshing machine they had a caravan in which they lived. They also had a large "international" tractor with rubber tyres. It was the first time we had ever seen a tractor with tyres. All the tractors we had seen before that had steel wheels.

The Glynns said "we will be out of her in less than two days". In fact they were there for approximately four weeks.

Next morning the whole countryside was covered in snow which lasted for approximately six weeks. The extreme conditions occurred all across Europe. Tens of thousands lost their lives because of the cold especially in war ravaged Europe where coal was scarce and homes damaged during the war.

As children we had a great time sliding or skating on frozen ponds and frosty roads. Many schools were closed, which was a great bonus too for children. Some years later, we took the occasional German boy into our home at the behest of the Authorities and gave them work on the farm. One boy from Hanover, described the cold and hunger they suffered that winter of 1947. He described how they chased dogs down narrow laneways where other boys were waiting with a net to capture the dog or dogs. They would then run home and kill the dog or dogs for meat.

At home Walter and myself and Ignatius had devised a simple method of catching birds, which we killed and cooked. We got a large door which we propped up at an angle of approximately 30 degrees. The

door was supported by a piece of timber to which we attached a rope. We then put food for the birds under the door. The birds, being very hungry rushed in for the food. By pulling the rope the door collapsed and the birds were pressed into the snow where we just picked them up and selected the larger ones for cooking. The others were released. The various flavours were interesting. However, mother ordered us to stop. She thought it was not right to be killing the birds. She never thought it was wrong to kill rabbits, chickens or hares. Personally, I could not see why she felt so strongly about the wild birds, but had no qualms about killing rabbits and chickens etc.

In the late spring of 1947 my eldest brother, aged 19 years, got pneumonia. He was dangerously ill, so I was obliged to stay at home to work on the farm. Pneumonia, prior to antibiotics, was a very serious illness.

During those years too the country was ravaged by tuberculosis, which was referred to as the "consumption" or TB. Whole families were wiped out by the TB and homes were abandoned where one or more of the family hot the "consumption". People were afraid to associate with members of a family where one or more of the family got TB. Dr. Noel Browne, who subsequently became Minister for Health had his whole family wiped out by TB. He himself survived the TB which he got twice. As a consequence of Padraig's pneumonia, my entry to second level was delayed until 1948, by which time I was 15 years of age.

"Harvest Volunteers"

The Big Freeze followed a disastrous harvest weather in August and September of 1946. The concern about the harvest was such that the Government called upon those living in cities, particularly Dublin, to help the farmers to save the harvest. Army lorries were used to bring the helpers from Dublin and other cities and towns to help save the harvest. Many of these helpers, including girls, were originally from rural areas. The girls no doubt were aware of the great work city girls in England did when they were sent to work on farms during the war years.

As Dublin was a city, where girls significantly outnumbered the numbers of young men, perhaps they were also motivated to go in the hope of meeting some suitable men. Reporting of all of this was sporadic and, of course, news spread by word of mouth tended to be exaggerated.

On our own farm the weather had caused significant damage. One whole field of oats was so flattened by rain and storms that it could only be cut with the scythe, which was very slow and hard work. The wheat was harvested by the usual "reaper and binder machine" but the quality of the grain for bread making was very poor indeed.

Padraic's return to health was slow and the next winter was more normal in terms of snow, rain and frost.

Neighbours

Our nearest neighbours were John Briggs and his family. They were the only family I ever knew, with that name – their fore bearers in years past were probably English. The youngest, Peter was my age and he worked in the drapery business. Subsequently, he had his own shop in Mounthellen. He hurled with the Galway senior team for a few years.

Mom O'Brien and her family were very much involved with the horses, both in show-jumping and steeple-chase racing. There were three families of Morrisseys, all related. There were a number of Walsh families, again all related. A little further away there were McGraths, Naughtons, Monaghans, Burkes etc.

Almost all of them had large families and inevitably there was much emigration. I was never aware that any of these people were charged with any form of crime. We were all poor and emigration was common, but not nearly as common as those from poorer

farming areas of Connemara and Mayo.

House Keeping at Home

Starting the fire in the morning, to ready the breakfast, was a slow process, especially in winter, when first the oil lamp had to be lit and the fire fuel was very often of poor quality turf. Homemade butter was made once per week. Normally we had four or more shorthorn cows. They would calve at different times, so we always had a constant supply of milk. Whole milk was used for the house and for our school bottles. The remainder was put through a hand operated Alfa Laval separator, which separated the milk part (cream) from the whole milk. The cream was then put into a vat where it began to ferment and the skim milk was fed to pigs and calves. When the cream was ripe, after five to six days, it was put into a churn. The churn was a timber barrel mounted on a frame where it could be turned end over end, thus agitating the soured cream until the butter fat coagulated into lumps which floated. The fat was then collected and salted and moulded into shapes, similar to small bricks or any other shape you fancied. The remaining liquid, called buttermilk was usually used when consuming bacon and cabbage and boiled potatoes, a meal fit for a king. Such a meal can no longer be had, since there is no homemade butter and hence no buttermilk and what you get for potatoes when eating out now are a very poor substitute for the real Golden Wonder potatoes we had in those days.

Washing The Clothes

Once per week the washing tub and the washing board were placed on two chairs. The tub was similar to a half whiskey barrel and the washing board was made of a timber frame with a centre of timber which had ridges cut in it, so the clothes could be rubbed against this rough surface. Later on the centre in washing boards was made of ridged glass, a big improvement, but it could easily be broken, if dropped on the concrete floor in the kitchen. Washed clothes were hung on a long clothes line in the garden, after hand wringing, if the weather was dry, or in a line near the open fire (later on near the new Stanley stove) to finish the drying. It was all hard and time consuming work for the women – men would not get involved, that was "beneath their dignity". However, women were expected to work on milking cows, saving hay, picking potatoes etc., as well as rearing children. It truly was a man's world, in those days.

School Holidays

Holidays – there was no such luxury in rural areas, that was only for the city folk. When the school closed for the holiday break, it was fulltime farm work weeding crops, picking stones, saving hay, digging early potatoes etc., Later, when we could get the loan of a bicycle, we might get permission to cycle to the beach in Salthill, 12 miles away, but that was the holidays or a day at the Galway Races, when we reached teenage years.

It was the same for all rural children in the area. Boys, when they left school at the age of 14 years, usually worked on the home farm, or as paid farm labourers, on the other farms, before departing for England and very few to the USA. Girls suffered similar fate, working as maids in towns and cities, before departing to do similar work in England or the USA. Only a tiny minority went on to second or third level. Religious Orders of priests and nuns recruited many of these young people and some of them went on as priests and nuns to do good work both at home and more likely in Africa, Britain, the USA etc.

Parents would be very proud to have a son a priest, but having a daughter a nun, while good, was not seen as good as having a priest in the family. The numbers from rural areas, who went on to be doctors or engineers etc., were miniscule. Usually the eldest son got the farm, but he could not marry, until the younger members had left home. Of course, there were some exceptions. Men were therefore rather "mature"

Padraic and Mona's wedding

when they were free to marry and invariably they married much younger girls. That explains why there was no widower in the area, but there were very many widows. The matchmaker was still busy seeking out suitable girls for ageing bachelors. Haggling over the dowry she would bring would take place with the aid of a bottle of whiskey, which the matchmaker would supply, and often this helped seal the deal. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in the one kitchen was rarely a smooth path. Our Padraic, the eldest son, married a girl Mona Collins who he had been courting for a few years. She was a farmer's daughter in a family of fourteen. In the same year, I got my first paid job at the age of 23, so I "flew the nest" as the saying goes.

The new daughter-in-law moved in, at home, and mother was no longer boss in her own kitchen, where she worked so hard to cook and feed 10 children and all the hired help on the farm, as well. Humiliation, for a heroine, who lived for another twenty five years. More often than not it was the mother-in-law who ruled the roost (the wicked mother-in-law syndrome). One way or the other it was not a healthy situation and, quite rightly, it has gone out of fashion. As they say "you cannot have two queen bees in the one bee hive. Regrettably no children were born to Padraic and Mona, but after seventeen years of marriage, they adopted a baby girl. The following year they applied to adopt a baby boy, but as their combined ages was in excess of 80 years, they were refused, much to their regret and indeed to mother's regret. However, she was not short of grandchildren, having in excess of 40 before she died in 1981, aged 83 years, a mother to be proud of.

Rural Electrification

Rural electrification was the single most important event in my youth, improving the quality of life, especially for women in their homes. Despite this there were those who opposed the rural electrification. Some people argued that it would kill all the birds, others worried that it would influence the weather, but the majority signed up for it.

The timber poles to carry the wires were erected by farmers' sons, with spades, picks and shovels to dig holes and a horse to pull the poll upright. The speed of the operation would put today's ESB staff to shame. Erecting a single pole now involves a lorry, a JCB which will not only dig the hole, it will pick up the pole and stand it upright in the hole with a least three or four men involved, mostly looking on at the machine doing the work.

My brother Walter, who was studying civil engineering, did all the wiring of the home and the farmyard and the wiring was accepted by the ESB staff before we were connected.

The big day came when we were connected to the ESB grid in 1955. When switched on in the home my mother just said "My God look at the dirt of the kitchen". For those of us trying to study at home, it was a real bonus – studying by candle light or oil lamp was not very easy. Then came electric cookers, washing machines and a host of other useful gadgets to make life easier for the mothers of Ireland, who were working by candle light in winter mornings and long winter evenings.

With the arrival of rural electrification, much of the drudgery ended. In came, instant light with the flick of a switch. Electric kettles, cookers, washing machines, electric ironing of the shirts, all so clean and easy. Likewise, there was no need to take the radio battery to be charged in Athenry five miles away.

Reading and writing was now much easier with good light, especially in winter. Feeding of housed animals before going to school in winter was a joy, compared with the old ways, carrying a storm lantern. Rural electrification changed rural life in so many ways that we could scarcely have imagined beforehand and for the women in particular, it changed the quality of their lives for the better. It also made it possible to get good quality water by boring through the limestone rock and sinking an electrically driven pump to supply good quality water. This supply in turn meant we could install an indoor flush toilet and have water on tap, no more going to the tank with a bucket to fetch water for all the household needs and very important, I could now go to the toilet under a roof, not as heretofore under a wet sky and I had toilet paper rather than a bunch of wet grass, and I could have a shower, a real luxury after sweating doing hard farm work. God bless Mr. Edison of the USA who had 1093 patents to his name, before he died, including electric power generation and distribution, the electric light bulb, telephone transmitter and the humble gramophone which gave young and old so much pleasure, whether it was dance music or the golden voices of John McCormack and Margaret Burke Sheridan or the great Italian Tenor Enrico Caruso etc.

Yes Mr. Edison, you changed the lives of people for the better, all over the world. Yet your name is not nearly as well known as the evil men like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Caesar, Pol Pot and many more who visited death, destruction, slavery and poverty etc., on innocent people. Shakespeare summed it well when he wrote: "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is of interred with their bones".

In our schools curriculum, it was all about wars, killing and conquest. The real heroes like Edison and Fleming who introduced antibiotics were not on the agenda.

Horses and Asses at Home

Horses were the sole source of power on farms in our area in the forties. There are many breeds of horses but the predominant breed on farms, in those days, was Irish Draught horses. This breed was gentle and versatile, being capable of all farm work as well as pulling traps and side-cars to take people on a journey. The bicycle was also a very common form of transport, but getting tyres for the bicycle during the war years was very difficult. Thieves

did not steal bicycles; they just stole the wheels, especially if the tyres were good.

We generally had three horses, which allowed ploughing etc., to carry on while the third horse was taking trips to town with the trap or going to fairs with livestock to sell and buy.

In July, of each year, just before the Galway races, a big horse fair was held in Turloughmore, just a few miles from home. Gypsies, as distinct from tinkers, were big dealers in horses and they always had up to fifty or more horses for which they required accommodation, on the night before the fair. I cannot recall how we got the news that their horses would be put in the widow Raftery's field on the eve of the fair.

Padraic, Walter and myself went out about midnight and sure enough there was up to forty horses in the meadow, which was just due to be cut, to make hay for winter feed. We drove the animals quietly to a large shed, in the home farmyard, where we proceeded to cut off all the long hair of the tails and manes. The pile of horse-hair was quite high, and valuable, for making mattresses. We then put various coloured paints on the horses, of which made them un-saleable, the following day.

Finally we did something rather reckless, but you can't but old heads on young shoulders. We tied an old bucket to the last horse's tail as we let them out on the main road. The bucket of course kept hitting the horse on the heels as he ran, so there was a stampede of animals which could have caused serious damage to pedestrians, or cyclists in their path. This work done, we retired to bed. The following morning local farmers were physically assaulted by a gang of gypsies, who never suspected that the widow's young sons would have done such a thing.

The gypsies never brought their horses into our town land again and we only revealed that we were the culprits some months later.

Mom O'Brien's sons were big into horses, working horses, jumping horses and later race horses. One of her grandsons became top jockey for Tom Draper, winning several big races in Ireland and England. Later he set up his own training stables, near home. Seeing the joy and success of the O'Brien men Padraic decided he would like to have a horse capable of farm work and steeple chasing and he did win the Farmer's Race at the local point to point, but that was the high point of his racing career.

Asses

With all the horses in the O'Brien's there were two stallion asses running wild after the horses. Walter and I asked the O'Brien's if we could have the asses, and they agreed, knowing full well the problems we would have trying to train two wild stallion asses. We did manage to corral them, but catching and restraining, let alone training them, at such an advanced age, was pretty challenging. They kicked, and tried to bite or refused to stir when captured. On one occasion, when I was on the asses back, he simply refused to move. A wild workman we had saw the predicament. He was painting the front gate. He approached and tried to coax the ass to move, but to no avail. Suddenly he got a rather cruel idea. He simply lifted the asses' tail and gave him a shot of turpentine under the tail. The ass took off at full speed and I hanging on but instead of turning when approaching a low hawthorn hedge, he just burst through it leaving me cut and humiliated with torn trousers and thoroughly humbled. The ass was not captured again for several days.

Walter made a little four wheel trolley with a turn table in front, for his ass. The main problem with the trolley was the lack of brakes, so he had to use some form of brake, such as his boot or a large stick to slow down the trolley on the public road, in front of our home, where there was a small incline.

All in all, the ass experiment was not a

great success and the asses were released back to where they came from when Walter started as a boarder in St. Jarleth's College in Tuam, in September 1946.

Agricultural Advisory Service

During the war years and for some years after the war, we had what were known as the tillage inspectors. Farmers were obliged to till a certain proportion of the land to grow crops particularly wheat, to make bread to feed the people. This applied even where land was not very suitable for tillage and people who did not comply with the law were open to prosecution and fines. The tillage Inspectors were replaced by the Agricultural Advisors who by and large were graduates in Agricultural Science from University College Dublin. Initially, there was great suspicion of these men as they were seen by farmers as some kind of successors to the Tillage Inspectors.

First Visit of the Agricultural Advisor

Sometime around 1946-47 a man came into the field, where we were working. He introduced himself as Con Howard, the local Agricultural Advisor, and suggested he could help us with scientific advice. He was such a sincere gentleman that Padraic and myself were very impressed and we assured him that we would welcome his help.

Our neighbours were quite suspicious, and warded that he had only "book knowledge of farming" but we paid no heed. He then began a series of lectures at night in the local National School. Padraic attended with a small number of other young men. I was too young, but I read the notes that Padraic took and the leaflets from the Department of Agriculture which he gave them, free of charge.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Con and colleagues like him began a revolution in agriculture in Ireland which resulted in Ireland becoming a major exporter of food, particularly livestock products, such as beef, butter and cheese, as opposed to a nation which was regularly importing food for humans and livestock just a few years earlier. Following that visit and subsequent visits by Con, I decided that I would do a degree in Agricultural Science.

Coming of Radio

Sometime in the mid forties, a Mr. Bailey arrived from Galway in a motor car. He was a regular visitor, shooting wild birds in winter. He brought a large box into the kitchen and announced he had a radio to demonstrate. I never heard of a home radio, previously. He set it up with its wet and dry batteries and long wire, known as a radio aerial was attached to the back of the radio and extended to a tree about 30 yards away. He then switched it on and to our amazement we heard a broadcast of the daily news.

Whatever the cost, mother realised that this would be good for the family, and so it was. Apart from news, we had Question Time with Joe Linnane, and Dinjo conducting dancing – it must be a world first to have a dancing program on the radio. Then there was Peadar O'Connor's "Making and Mending" programme in which he explained how to do odd jobs around the house. He always finished by adding "if that does not work try something else".

Far more important for me was Michael O'Hehir broadcasting the sports matches. Neighbours came to hear the All-Ireland Football Final, in which the neighbouring County, Roscommon was playing and to our great delight Roscommon won, having beaten Kerry. The wet battery had to be charged regularly and that meant bringing it into Athenry roughly once per week. We got no real news of the war, which was drawing to a close. News of the concentration camps shocked most people, but the real anti-Brits refused to believe it, saying it's just some more British and USA propaganda.

While the arrival of radio, to rural Ireland was wonderful, it did reduce visiting each other's houses and neighbourly contact.

Rural Life in the Forties and Fifties in Ireland

The Forties and early fifties were a time of excessive religious zeal and poverty, allied with a lack of gainful employment and very large families, which resulted in large scale emigration to Britain and the USA.

Ultan Cowley in his book "The Men Who Built Britain" records a history of the Irish navvy, how they were exploited when able to work and how so many of them, when unable to work lived in dire poverty.

Professor Joe Lee in his book "History of Ireland" revealed that between 1951 to 1961 over 400,000 people emigrated – far more than in any other decade in the entire century – most of them to Britain.

Thousands of these emigrants joined the British and US armies and needless to say their families never saw many of them again. Those who stayed at home, on small farms, augmented their incomes by catching and exporting rabbits. At that time, rabbits were a plague – consuming much of the farmers' crops, especially on small farms where the fields were very small and the rabbits sheltered in burrows and in the ditches, which surrounded the little fields. At the same time, there was a food crisis in Britain due to the adverse affects of the war in Europe, and meat was in short supply. As a consequence, rabbit meat was very popular in Britain. As late as 1951, Ireland exported 5.5 thousand tons of rabbit to Britain. In the same year Ireland imported 5 thousand tons of butter from New Zealand and Denmark. That tells its own story about how primitive Irish agriculture was then.

Some families got almost their entire household income from trapping and selling rabbits. Simple snares were used, which caught the rabbits on their nightly escapades and during the day ferrets were put into rabbit burrows and the rabbits were trapped in nets as they emerged in haste from the burrows.

It was quite common to see men cycling with rabbits hanging from the cross bar and handle bars and in boxes on the carrier of the bicycle. British consumers were glad to get rabbit meat, for which they paid a reasonable price. The arrival of myxomatosis in the mid fifties decimated the rabbit population and finished rabbit exports. Serious farmers welcomed the virtual elimination of the rabbit.

Farm Houses and coming of Electricity

Farmer's homes were generally small, with no electricity, or running water and non indoor toilets. Females used chambers pots and males took to the fields in all kinds of weather. Grass was the common "toilet tissue" at that time. I remember a little poem which finished as follows – "I wiped my arse with a bunch of grass and walked away quite contented".

Candles and oil lamps, when oil was available, provided light in the homes and storm lanterns were used in the farmyard. The time it took to light the fire and ready the breakfast, was very considerable. Despite these difficulties, large families were the norm. With the new found wealth of today, houses are getting larger and families getting smaller.

Chapter 3 – Secondary School

Secondary Education

In 1946 my brother Walter went to St. Jarlath's Secondary School in Tuam as a boarder. For myself I still hated school. Master O'Regan issued the ultimate threat by warning that if I did not study, I would end up a farmer. This was rather amusing, as that was the only career I wished for.

In 1947, when my eldest brother Padraic got Pneumonia, I had to quit school to help the running of the farm. It gradually dawned on me that I would be unable to acquire a farm, so consequently the best option was further education. In the spring of 1948 it was decided that I could go to second level in the autumn. All the local colleges, Jarleths in Tuam, St. Mary's in Galway and Garvally in Ballinasloe were already fully booked. Mother, as usual, came to the rescue. My parents had a long-time friendship with a Taheny family in Galway. Donal Taheny, a son who had become a secondary teacher, might be able to help. Donal had just secured a post in Ballyfin, a Patrician Brothers College near Port Laois. He phoned the Patricians pleading on my behalf, and I was accepted only because of Donal's pleading and that was a lucky break for me.

Ballyfin

Getting ready for Ballyfin – well I had nothing to do with that. Mary labelled all my clothes and bought pyjamas. I never used pyjamas, but now I would have to use them. Two pairs of every clothing were prepared. I would travel with Donal Taheny to Ballyfin. I was pleased to have company, as I had never been away from home. The furthest I had ever travelled was 20 miles to visit Walter in St. Jarlath's College. This may sound extraordinary, but it was quite common in those days. I was 15 years of age on August 15 in 1948 bound for Ballyfin in September.

On the appointed day, Mother disappeared to bed. I put my head into her bedroom to say goodbye, but she was just crying. I was, of course, the first to go 'far away' from home. Mary dropped me with the horse and trap to the railway station in Athenry. I met a boy I knew, Joe McGovern, who was going off to Limerick to do his Leaving Certificate, very confident of success. Well if Joe was confident, I should be too, given his past record.

This was my first train journey. Into the station it came puffing and steaming – very impressive indeed. Having boarded the train I found Donal, who was a most entertaining man, with all sorts of stories. It shortened the journey. We had to change trains in Limerick. As there was a delay, Donal decided to visit his brother, a Dominican Priest, where we got tea and biscuits. The train from Limerick to Maryborough, as it was known then, was low and it was quite dark and wet when we arrived. The Patrician Brothers had a number of Taxis to take students from various trains and busses. One of the boys in the taxi, with Donal and myself was a Harry Keogh from Myshalin, Co. Carlow. In Ballyfin, he was a very quiet boy – did not play games, did not excel in studies etc. Many years later, when working on the breeding of new varieties of potato, Harry produced a variety named 'Rooster', which became internationally renowned, but as far as I know, he never published how he achieved such a winner.

On a wet and windy September evening, we arrived in Ballyfin, with scarcely any view of Ballyfin House. Donal disappeared and eventually we got our beds and lockers, and with shoe rooms. As was usual, I awoke early and went for a walk while all other boys slept. I opened a door which led into the main stairs and stairwell off the great house. It was the most beautiful stairs and ceiling I had ever seen. Ballyfin House is regarded by many people as the most beautiful house in Ireland.

From a dormer cottage where we slept three or four to a bed, in a house which

had no electricity, no running water, no indoor toilets, to this most beautiful house, wall all modern conveniences. I wondered did I die and wake up in heaven. Reality soon hit me. I was not in heaven, but it certainly was a huge improvement on home and on top of that we got to play games several times during the week. I wondered why so many boys were so unhappy in Ballyfin – I felt sorry for them.

Students had very limited access to the manor house. Our class rooms etc., were in a rather ugly more modern building. The chapel, in which we had mass every morning, was located in the original house. After mass we marched through a connecting corridor to the refectory in the new ugly building and subsequently went straight into class rooms. Breakfast consisted of porridge and some bread, with very little butter. The bread was made in the estate from wheat grown on the estate farm.

Ballyfin Estate

The estate consisted of 640 acres, enclosed by high stone walls. It had been owned by the Coote family and was purchased by the Patrician Brothers, in 1932-33 with the aim of setting up a boy's school. The Cootes were farmer landlords, who owned great tracts of land in what was then known as Queen's County – hence the name Maryborough after Queen Mary of England. Ballyfin House was designed by the Morrisons of East Cork, renowned Architects of their day.

By a strange coincidence, I was involved, later in my working life, with two other Morrison Houses – Lyons Estate and House, purchased by UCD in 1962 and Fota Estate and House purchased by UCC in 1975.

However, I was in Ballyfin to study, not to admire the house.

Patrician Brothers

I had never heard of this order, although I subsequently learned they had a day-school in Galway city.

They were founded by the Bishop of Kildare and Loughlin, Dr. Cullen and their novitiate was in Tullow, Co. Carlow. They operated 1st and 2nd level schools in many parts of Ireland and overseas, including Asia and Africa.

A Patrician Brother O'Connell from North Cork, and teaching in Kenya, many years later, was the first to recognise the natural ability of Kenyan boys to run long distances. Despite the fact that he had no background in athletics, he coached numerous Olympic Gold Medal winners, and is still producing Gold Medal athletes.

Brother Valerian, a Wicklow man, was President for my first year in Ballyfin. For the next three years Brothers Dennis Lomasney was President. There were many excellent Brothers during my time in Ballyfin, such as Brother Vincent from Kinnenaule, Co. Tipperary, Brother Daniel Egan from Offaly, Brother Joseph Doheny, from Tipperary, Brother Silverius also from Tipperary, Brother Oliver Healy from Abbeyknockmay, Co. Galway. Brother Oliver took a special interest in me, because his relations, a Caulfield family, were near neighbours at home. He was a very staunch De Valera man. Despite our differences in politics, he took a special interest, in the "neighbour's child" as it were.

Both Brothers Daniel and Joseph were agricultural science graduates and Brother Daniel was a fine footballer, in his youth. All these fine men devoted their whole lives to educating young Irish boys and they were a rather lonely lot in old age, as I was to witness later.

Studies and Sport

Being 15 years old I was much older than other new students, but being small of stature and looking younger than my age, no notice was taken by the general body of students. The brothers and Donal Taheny knew, of course, and were very understanding. I expressed the wish to complete

Tom Raftery (circled) and the Ballyfin hurling team c. 1954

2nd level in four years, not the more usual 5 or 6 years.

The only subject which was causing me a problem was Latin, where other boys had a head-start. I was never very keen on languages, being more interested in maths, science and geography. I did get a very respectable intermediate certificate. In the next year, referred to as fourth year by other students, I sat back a bit and got very involved in sport, football and hurling, and the home farm.

My first match for Ballyfin was in Carlow. Brother Silverius was the car driver. As we passed out of town in Maryborough, I saw a shop with the name Ramsbottom, and I got a fit of laughing. Brother Silverius enquired what I was laughing at and I said that name Ramsbottom, saying we had a sheep farm at home and I said "a ram's bottom is not a pleasant sight – adding I would not like to be named Ramsbottom". He saw the humour in it and had a good laugh himself. It relieved the tension.

In Carlow town, I saw a beautiful round stone building, with magnificent railings around it. Brother Silverius said it was the Courthouse. Years later, I learned that it was designed by the Architects who designed Ballyfin, Fota House, Lyons House – the Morrisons father and son, who were originally from East Cork. We won the match, beating St. Peter's of Wexford.

After the match we got a good meal. One of the supporters who travelled that day was a Feeney boy from Sligo. He was a good handball player and he liked a handball with the Elephant logo on it. When the meal was over he invited me to go with him to buy a handball. We went into the little shop and he asked for a handball. The woman in the shop gave him a soft sponge ball, whereupon in frustration he said "it's an Elephant I want". The woman got very angry, shouting "young blagguards, get out or I will call the guards". I ran out laughing, but Feeney could not understand her outburst of anger.

Despite my lack of stature I represented Ballyfin at both junior and senior levels in football and hurling in the Leinster championships in 1951. In hurling senior semi-final, we played St. Vincent's of Marino Dublin. I was lucky enough to grab a few goals and the match was reported in the Irish Independent. A neighbour read it and went to mother to congratulate her. She was far from pleased. In her mind hurling was very dangerous. And indeed it was, between a few local clubs in Galway, where it was often an excuse to exact some revenge for a real or more likely an imaginary grievance. We were narrowly defeated in the senior hurling final, played in Dr. Cullen Park, Carlow, by St. Kieran's of Kilkenny and in addition to defeat; I got a nose injury which gives me trouble to this day. I had the consolation however of being picked on the Leinster schoolboy's panel for the interprovincial championship, which we lost in a replay.

In football too, in both junior and senior, we lost out to better teams, particularly St. Mells of Longford.

Fifth year (my forth) was crucial, so much depended on it. If I did not get a scholarship or call for teaching to St. Pats., Drumcondra, the USA would probably have been my next step. My sister Bridie had already emigrated to San Francisco, where there were relatives on my mother's side. The only phone call I ever received, in the four years in Ballyfin, was from Bridie, to tell me she was on her way to Cobh to take the boat to the USA. Indeed, that was the first time in my life to use a phone and it was the only phone in the College – It was in the President's Office, a big black object.

Unlike the previous year, I applied myself with more determination to studies. Also I was no longer eligible for the junior teams; hence less outings for matches, I did however practice hard for the two senior teams.

We won the Leinster Colleges senior hurling final that year, beating Cistercian College Roscrea in the semi-final and Knockbeg College in the final. The last time Ballyfin had won was 10 years previously in 1942. In football too we were doing well having defeated the favourites, Good Council of New Ross. I was centre forward for Ballyfin and Erick Ryan from Cork a boy in excess of 6ft was centre back, marking me. The plan to send in the ball low worked and Erick was shifted and a smaller player substituted but we won. Erik played as a centre field player for Cork in the All-Ireland Football finals of 1956 and 1957.

Our next match was against St. Mels of Longford in Tullamore. We were quietly confident but on the night before the match a most unusual occurrence upset the whole school. Brother Silverius came home late and noticed a light in the Sacristy. He just went to switch it off only to find a number of boys including a few of the team enjoying themselves on alter wine. The rest of us learned, to our consternation, of the event, after mass the following morning.

This was an air of gloom at breakfast. We knew that boys would be expelled including some of our team. Among the group were two Casey's, Jack and Tim both from Limerick and both related to a future Bishop who hit the headlines, over 30 years later.

We travelled in a mood of gloom to the match in Tullamore. The first half was a disaster, with Mels leading by 6 points by half-time. We got a right dressing down from the trainer, at half-time and told to forget what happened the previous night. We came out, all fired up. The centre back, marking me was Jim Harold, who subsequently played centre back for Longford and Leinster. Jim was a big man, and the ball was not coming in at the level I had hoped for. In frustration, I stood on Jim's boot when he was about to fetch a high ball, a foul of course, but the referee did not see the offence. What he saw was Jim having me by the throat and a fist ready

to hit me. A warning to Jim, a free to Ballyfin and a turning point for us. A priest from Mels came in and shifted him to full back, fearing that Jim would loose his cool again and be put off the pitch. From being 6 points down at half-time, we were beaten by just a single point. Writing about the match, next day 26th February 2952, S.F. Bergin in the Irish Independent wrote as follows "Only in the second half did the Ballyfin forwards come into their own and then it was through the initiative of their very elusive pivot Raftery. McCarthy and Dockery also needed the closest attention". Full-forward Ryan with a point got the only score for Mels in the second half. A unique double was lost, in my view, because of bad altar wine.

The boy playing beside me at right-half forward was Michael Osborne who went on to become a Veterinary Surgeon and a Manager of the Irish National Stud in Kildare. He was a boy and man with a great sense of humour and lover of houses and a faithful supporter of Kildare football.

He raised the profile of the National Stud, nationally and internationally. He had a gift for marketing, being among the first to use tee-shirts in Ireland for marketing horses. Tee shirts, of various colours with Irish National Stud, printed on front and back, were sold and given freely on occasions. Michael told me how this got him into an embarrassing situation in a US airport. He noticed this group of girls looking at him and then one of the group approached asking "Are you really the Irish National Stud?" He changed the tee shirt for a more usual shirt for the rest of his stay in the USA.

His other great interest was Kildare football and he played a huge part in convincing the great Kerry football Manager Mick O'Dwyer to come and train his beloved Kildare football team. Success followed with Kildare winning a Leinster final and being narrowly defeated in the All-Ireland final by Galway. It was a long long time since Kildare had previously reached the All Ireland finals.

Despite the defeat by Mels, Ballyfin got two selected for the school boys inter provincial team – Mick Murphy from Cork and myself.

The inter provincial match against Ulster Colleges was in Dundalk. In the pre-match dressing room, having looked around to see such giants of young men, I asked myself how I, scarcely five foot six inches got here. Many of these boys I had not seen before, but I had heard of a few of them, particularly Frank Ivers. Frank was about 16 years, standing 6ft and 3 or 4 inches and weighing 16.5 stone in weight, with beautiful black wavy hair. Four years later he won an All Ireland, playing centre-field for Galway in the All-Ireland against Cork with the afore-mentioned Erick Ryan at midfield for Cork.

We lost out narrowly to Ulster and although I had a good game, it was, for all practical purposes, the end of my sporting career, for personal and family reasons, except for a couple of matches I played for Athenry and St. Martins Club in Wexford, six years later. I was invited to a trial for the under 21 Galway county hurling team but in view of my mother's concerns about hurling and in view of the work schedule at home, I declined. Many of these boys I played with and against went on to represent their counties at various levels and a number of them won All Ireland medals.

Leaving Cert and Leaving Ballyfin

Having completed the Leaving Cert meant leaving Ballyfin, and I felt a bit sad about that. I had only one serious complaint about Ballyfin and that was the food or the lack of it. Hunger was an everyday experience. Many of the boys had parents coming in on Sundays bring with them parcels of food. Visits from Galway were clearly not possible.

To this day I cannot understand why the Brothers, having a large farm, did not grow more potatoes and wheat for bread. I never got an answer to that and probably never will. Apart from that, I left feeling respect

for and gratitude to many of the brothers there.

On leaving Ballyfin I got a call to training in St. Pat., Drumcondra, a Galway County Council Scholarship and a Dept., of Agriculture Scholarship to UCD. In sport I got a Leinster College Medal and Sportsman of the Year award in Ballyfin.

I know how lucky I was to get a place in Ballyfin and I will always be grateful for that. In my time there, I never saw or heard of serious beatings or sexual abuse by any of the brothers. In later life I visited Ballyfin regularly and became a friend of many of them, especially Brother Dennis Lomasney, a Corkman.

In 1983 Dr. Drury, a former Ballyfin pupil and very well known medical doctor in Dublin wrote to me to inform me that Brother Dennis was ill, in the Patrician Brothers House in Tullow and that Dennis expressed the wish to see me.

I drove from Cork to Tullow and found Brother Dennis in bed, looking reasonably well. His evening meal was delivered but he ate very little. We talked of many things, old times, the economy, education, Ballyfin etc., I felt the better for it, but I was unaware why he wanted to see me. I can only conclude that he was lonely, in this large Community House and probably very few visitors to talk to. Exactly one month later I got a call from a cousin of his in Cork to tell me that Dennis had died. I attended his funeral in Tullow which was a simple affair.

In these days it is fashionable to criticise religious orders, who operated schools. Of course there were some serious abuses. Why should we be surprised by that? Were we not told that Jesus selected 12 apostles? – one of them betrayed him and one denied him – that's probably a higher percentage of wrong doing than occurred in religious communities, who devoted their lives to educating young people at home and overseas, especially when we did not have the State commitment to do so. I continued to visit Ballyfin when possible, where I saw other good men in their declining health – it was a sad sight. I also noted the deterioration of this magnificent house and it worried me – but more of that later.

Chapter 4 - 3rd level

Now to Third Level Education

I had my mind made up to study Agricultural Science in University, but as the Agricultural Science Faculty was in UCD this could pose too much of a financial burden on mother, unless of course, I could get a scholarship. As a fall-back situation I applied for teacher training in St. Pats., Drumcondra which would have cost much less than a degree in Agriculture which was effectively a five year course – one year in an Agricultural College and four at University.

I also applied for a Galway County Council scholarship to study Agriculture at University. At that time, I was a frequent visitor to the Agricultural College in Athenry. I got to know two of the lecturers, Sean Ward and Pat McHugh, pretty well. Sean was very sociable and great fun, especially after a couple of pints. The Director was Dr. Ruane a more formidable man, who had a huge influence on my life some years later.

Pat McHugh was very eager to help, probably because he was aware of my family circumstances. Pat suggested I take the State Scholarship examination, which was designed for boys who studied in one of the State recognised Agricultural Colleges.

I will help you he said but "I have not studied in any of these colleges I protested". "I know" he said, "but the chances are they will not ask you where you studied". I took him at his word and he gave me the curriculum they followed in Athenry College and a whole lot of Department of Agriculture leaflets plus previous examination papers. He also helped me with the identification of grasses and common weeds. From home experience, I was very familiar with farm animals and farm machinery.

The State Examination Scholarship was in Dublin, in Earlsfort Terrace, UCD. I got a lift to Dublin from a friend who had an old wreck of a Ford Anglia. Since I did not know Dublin I enquired from a passerby "where could I find Dublin University". "There it is" he said pointing at the entrance to Trinity College. Is that UCD? I enquired, no he said that's in Earlsfort Terrace and he very kindly explained how I could get there. I got there just in time. The written exam was in the Great Hall and we were called out in turn for an oral exam. I was pretty pleased with how I got on, but most of all I was happy that they did not ask which Agricultural College I attended.

Many of those taking the exam knew each other, but the only face I recognised was Professor Drew, who was the Professor of Agriculture, as I had seen his photo in the Farmers Journal. I thumbed a lift home again.

Shortly afterwards I got an offer to enter St. Pats., Drumcondra. I kept that offer to myself, feeling that pressure might be put on me to accept it.

Then almost simultaneously, I was offered the Galway County Council scholarship and the State Scholarship in Agriculture. In the intervening period, a very good friend of the family Mr. Pakie McGrath, for whom I often cut hay and corn, arrived at home to congratulate mother on my getting the Galway Co. Council scholarship. He saw the results in the Connaught Tribune. As I had not informed mother she was very hurt. Trying to explain that I was awaiting the results of the Department of Agriculture exams before informing her, was not good enough. The neighbours knew before her. I had no idea that such results would be published. A few days later the offer of the State Scholarship arrived and I informed her, but the trust was broken.

Naturally, I declined the call to St. Patrick's for teacher training. The choice now was between the State Scholarship and the County Council Scholarship. If I took the State Scholarship, I would be obliged to attend UCD for the full four years. Taking the Galway scholarship allowed me to take two years of the course i.e. the basic sciences,

in Galway. I opted for the latter, as living at home I had significant surplus money. My first investment, from this surplus was my first wrist watch. Then came some new clothes and shoes, and after that I contributed to the family budget.

At the same time, my brother Walter was accepted into first year of Civil Engineering. The attraction and logic of buying the first family car to travel into Galway, five days per week, was now obvious. A used Vauxhall Wyvery car, with just three forward gears and a gear shift on the steering column was purchased. It did the job admirably with Walter monopolising the driving – no driving test was required in those days. We usually picked up couple of others on the way each day.

A simple lunch, of good brown bread with plenty home-made butter was provided each morning, which was eaten in the car during lunch hour with a bottle of milk. A more substantial meal was provided after returning at approximately 6pm each evening.

First Year Students

Basic science subjects e.g. Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics etc., were taken together by pre-Med and pre-Dental, plus Science, Engineering and Agricultural Science students. It was here I met Joe McGovern again – the boy who was so confident about the leaving on the day I was off to Ballyfin. Joe was repeating 1st Agr., for the third time. Notices of times of classes were posted up in different Departments. The Professor of Physics had a large notice, in chalk, in the lecture theatre. The notice was as follows "I will meet my Classes at 2.30pm". The class room was filled with a very varied group of disciplines. There were nuns, priests, Christian Brothers etc. Plus lay men and girls. Roughly 10% were female.

Professor Bradley was unmarried and rumoured to like the ladies. Up pops, the confident Joe McGovern wiping the C from Classes, to a great laugh from the students. Professor Bradley entered with a flowing Academic Gown. Seeing the alter notice he just wiped of the "l" so now it read "asses". He gave us a pep talk and classes proper commenced the following day. Needless to say the confident Joe never qualified.

At the end of the Academic year we had the usual exams. Some Professors would let you know how you did, before results were published. I called to Professor Dillon about my chemistry exam results. Without consulting his notes (Raftery was a rare name even in Galway) he said "You got first place in Chemistry".

I left very pleased with myself but doubts began to set in. There was another Raftery, a very quiet student who did not socialise – surely he was tops in chemistry. In 1980, while visiting California Institute of Technology I met the said Raftery who was by then a world class Bio-Chemist. Now I was certain that I did not get placed 1st in the class.

Professor Dillon, in Galway, was always very nice to the Agriculture students. Later I learned that his own son Michael graduated in agriculture and went on to become a prominent Agricultural Journalist. With the introduction of television in the sixties, he had a programme Mart and Market where he gave very valuable information to farmers about prices around the country, and the livestock were shown on television. Michael Dillon was a very bald man resembling an actor called "Kojak", so Michael quickly became known as "Cowjak".

At the end of first year it was usual to look out for new students who might buy the necessary books and other items which 1st year students needed. I approached this very nice innocent looking boy and offered to sell him what I no longer wanted. He agreed to buy and to my surprise gave me the price I asked for – no haggling, so I actually made a profit on the used property, I bought the previous year. A couple of days later he disappeared. I was told he took up a place in St. Pats., in Drumcondra, to

become a teacher. Some years later I saw his photo in the paper and a report that he had been dismissed from his teaching post, at the behest of Archbishop McQuaid, his name – John McGahern. I felt guilty about overcharging him in 1953, in Galway, but I really enjoyed his writings in later years and the television series "Amongst Women".

Second year was uneventful and I spent too much time working on the farm at home, with the result that I almost failed in one subject, which would have caused me to lose the scholarship.

The most memorable event of the year was the Med-ball. Medical graduates always had a dance in the hanger ballroom in Salthill, on graduation day. I was there and I saw a new graduate get very ill – too much drink – cheap drink, poitín. Some of his colleagues took him out and put him into a car to sleep it off. Later that night when they went back to the car, they found he was dead. What a tragedy, particularly for his family, who were small farmers in Mayo.

Now I could understand why my mother was so anti-poitín. She quoted several other cases she know of where people lost their lives as a result of consuming too much or bad poitín.

I did not participate in any serious way in GAA games at UCG as there was not time for practice. However, I was determined to go to see the Sigerson Cup final between UCD and UCG to be played in Dublin. I travelled with a small group, on a Friday afternoon, for the match the following afternoon in Belfield.

We had no accommodation but we met some graduates from UCG who were doing their internship in Hollows Street Maternity Hospital. They assured us they had empty beds and that we could use the empty beds in the hospital and sure enough, we got lovely individual rooms. After a good sleep I heard a woman, the matron I believe, shouting at one of my colleagues in the room next door. I jumped out of the bed, turned back the bed clothes and hid in the wardrobe. The door opened, nobody here she shouted and proceeded to catch another colleague in bed in the next room. My habit of waking early saved me. I got out quietly and waited for my fellow students to emerge. As we assembled, they were curious to know how I had escaped detection. "Up early" I replied. Now for breakfast – a fellow who knew Dublin, suggested we go to the Castle Hotel, where the team had booked. The Castle was a great GAA Hotel and had a reputation for plenty of food.

When we got to the hotel, the team and various members of UCG staff were having breakfast. They recognised our plight and were kind enough to quietly vacate a table where we sat and asked for second helpings. No problem! The Castle truly was a great place for hungry young men.

The match was in the early afternoon, in UCD sports ground Belfield, South Dublin. I headed north to the Albert College, where I met the Farm Manager. I would be coming to the Albert in September to continue my degree, so I was anxious to see the place. He was very helpful. Seeing some nice young pigs, I asked if he could sell me a boar. Yes he said, I have one or two for sale. We agreed on the price, I put a deposit on the animal, got a receipt and he agreed to forward the animal when the remainder of the price was paid and he did forward the animal by train, in a special crate some weeks later.

Having done my business, I set out for the match. My colleagues were intrigued to know where I went after breakfast, but when I told them they refused to believe me. I produced the receipt to much laughter of my colleagues. Unfortunately UCG was narrowly defeated.

When I got home, mother enquired where I had been, so I told her I was in the Albert College, where I bought the new boar which was needed on the home farm. I produced the receipt and convinced her that the Albert was the place to get a good

boar – no talk of the match and, needless to say, I did not tell her that I slept in the best known nursing residence in Dublin.

With all my concentration on farming I got just a pass in 2nd year. Part of the reason for spending so much time farming was that my eldest brother bought the second tractor, to supplement the small grey Ferguson, so much extra work, both at home and contract work for neighbours had to be done to pay for it.

Having a car facilitated going to Sunday night dances in Seapoint Ballroom in Galway. Seapoint was a huge ballroom with a stage, balconies etc.

As we were passing the Agricultural College on our way to Seapoint, I saw crows trapped in a wire cage in the College field. Stop, I demanded and I jumped into the field where I saw this clever crow trap. The birds would jump down through a narrow opening for the food but when trying to fly out the opening was too small for expanded wings. The sense of devilment, which I always had, came into play. I got a bag out of the boot of the car and put five or six crows in the jute sack and put them in the boot of the car. At Seapoint I showed the passengers how to put a crows head under its wing and then put the crow inside the jacket and keep the left arm pressed on the crow. All five of us walked in paying with the right hand and keeping the crow under the left arm. We then proceeded to the balcony and found a quiet spot to release the crows. The frightened crows took off over the dance floor, creating utter chaos and defecating down on the dancers. The band stopped and we joined in the efforts to get the crows out through the windows, which were opened fully for that purpose. The Manager Mr. Finan never found out how the crows got in. If he did, we would have been banned from the ballroom for the future.

Now to Dublin and UCD

A relatively small group of us from UCG jointed the 3rd year students of UCD, where we got into the science and practise of farming. Subjects like Animal Nutrition, Agricultural Botany, Agricultural Chemistry Plant Pathology, Soil Science, Agricultural Engineering and Agricultural Economics were dealt with over the next two years.

For Agricultural Engineering we had to travel into the College of Science, which was located in what is now Government Buildings in Merrion Square. Bicycles were the mode of transport. At that time the trams had been taken off the road, but the tram-lines were still there. We had to be careful not to get the front wheel of the bicycle caught in the tram-line, so you crossed at right angles, otherwise you could be knocked off in the midst of traffic. Now, of course, the trams are back again, but sadly cycling in Dublin is very rare because it's dangerous due to lack of decent cycle lanes. On meeting our Dublin counterpart, a big man approached me and said "are you the little bastard who snatched the goal in Carlow against St. Peters?" I did not recognise him "Well I was the fool, he said, who allowed you and my colleagues never forgave". We became good friends and his wife Eileen and my wife Bredhe were also great friends. His name was Aidan Conway, from Wexford.

The Ags., as we were known ran some of the most successful dances in Dublin. In Dublin, at that time, there were many more young women than young men. The men emigrated mainly to England and the girls tended to go to Dublin.

The Agricultural Faculty in these years were nearly 100 per cent male. Girls who went to dances in Dublin very often got nobody to take them out dancing. However, some smart fellows in the faculty spotted a good market and word went around offices in Dublin amongst the girls – "if you want to get a dance go to the Ags". Soon the numbers were getting so large that the Dublin Corporation and Gardai had to curtail the numbers going in. It was a nice money spinner and the surplus was divvied up at the end of the year, or was used to

go on an overseas trip to "study Agriculture".

We held regular meetings and debates in 86 St. Stephens Green. As we were on our way back to Glasnevin one evening, where we all lived in digs, we noticed great excitement in the Mansion House. It was a Fine Gael dance after their Ard Feis. A fellow from Co. Clare P.J. Neenan said hold there, and I will get ye in. We waited wondering how he was going to achieve that. He was in animated conversation with the man taking the tickets. The man tore each ticket in half giving half to the entering, which served as a pass out, to get back in again. While talking to the official at the door, he was filling his pockets with the half tickets which the doorman was putting in an open top box. He came back out and we all traipsed in handing up the half ticket. It was a stuffy affair – mainly middle aged and a host of well known politicians particularly James Dillon and John A. Costello. We certainly livened up the proceedings, much to the delight of the Leaders of Fine Gael, believing that at last the Party was attracting younger people. However, when it came to taking official photographs of the Ministers, T.Ds and Senators some of our lads, rather spoiled proceedings by getting into the official groupings. Eventually, it dawned on them that were a harmless bunch of wild students and everybody went home happy – no harm done.

The two years in Dublin were some of thebest and happiest of my life. Following our final exam, Tom Cusack, one of the only boys who had a car, drove a few of us out to party in Malahide. I drank too much whiskey and felt very bad the next day.

Heading back home I had the price of the train fare but not enough to buy a meal on the train. As I emerged from the train station in Athenry a young man in a US army uniform approached saying "I am your cousin Johnny Raftery from Boston". I had never heard of him. He was posted to Germany and decided to visit the folks in Ireland. "I am staying with Aunt Delia", who told him that "none of her nephews in Coshla drank alcohol". "Never mind Tom lets, have a drink before we go back to Delia for the tea." My God, I thought, what can I do now? Starving hungry and a sore head from the night before and now more drink.

After a few beers Johnny said "Let's go to Aunt Delia for the tea". Johnny opened the door and entered the house saying "this is your nephew Tom from Coshla who never takes a drink". I felt mortified and sick and very angry that he should offend Aunt Delia in such a brash way.

Johnny departed for Germany and I never saw him or heard from him again. Tom Cusack who drove us to Malahide, changed course and studied for the priesthood. He is now serving as a priest in Los Angeles and he phones or meets me when he comes back to Ireland.

What exactly attracted him to the priesthood, I do not know and I am still amazed by his apparently sudden vocation. Thankfully he seems to be very happy in the work he is doing.

Graduation

Graduation was in Earlsfort Terrace Dublin. On the day Padraic drove the car with mother and myself. It was a simple ceremony, I just walked up when called, accepted the parchment from President Tierney, who shook my hand and that was it.

The President made a short speech afterwards, after which we left the Aula Max to be greeted by the usual bunch of photographers. Following the photo exercise we got into the car and headed west again. The least mother was entitled to was a few hours in Dublin which she did not get. A short stop was made in Kinegad, I believe, where we had a bite to eat and off again towards home.

The day was finished off covering the pits of potatoes. Padraic never failed to get the maximum number of hours work on the

My graduation with Granny, Mona and Padraic

farm out of family members. Indeed when I was in Ballyfin, arriving back days after all the other students at the end of holidays became the norm. However for my final term in Ballyfin, I ignored his pleas and got back on the correct day.

Brother Dennis always addressed the assembled boys to welcome them back. His address started as follows "I assume all the boys are back except Raftery, whereupon there was aloud burst of laughter, followed by Brother Dennis saying "Is he really back?" I stood up and Brother Dennis thanked me for breaking my bad habit of coming back late.

Family Affairs

My mother died in 1981 aged 83 years. Looking back on her remarkable life, I wondered why she placed such a high value on education, when she herself had only a primary education.

Primary Education

In rural Ireland, at that time, only those going for the religious life went onto second and third level, apart from very few who went into teaching, medicine and little else. By and large, only a very small minority of young people from farms progressed to 2nd and 3rd levels. Those who did not inherit the farms invariably emigrated to Britain or the USA. Those young people going to the USA, at that time, would probably never return, so we had what became known as the "American wake", a big party with plenty of drink, music and tears.

Those going to Britain, of course, came home for Christmas, all dressed up to give the impression of success. The scale of emigration was an appalling indictment of our various governments, at that time.

In early January 1957, I travelled by train from Dublin to Wexford. At every station stop there were crowds of young people with their little suitcases, joining the train, which was going through Wexford to the Roslare Harbour, where they got the boat to England. It was a depressing sight. Emigration from the West and North West was even greater. Thank God, I had a mother who had intelligence and ambition to see her children get something better than the building sites for her sons, or household maids for her daughters. Ultain Cowley, in his book "The Men who Built Britain" gives a harrowing story of how most of these Irish immigrants ended their days in Britain. She truly was a remarkable woman in many ways.

Farm Workers

Over the years, we had many farm workers. In the autumn men from poorer areas such as Connemara and Mayo would stand around after last Mass on Sunday, in Athenry, hoping to be hired for picking potatoes, or pulling beet, or saving the harvest etc. Farmers would look at them, evaluating them like livestock for age, strength etc., before offering them work.

We usually had one or two permanent workers and occasionally one of these temporary workers, some of whom were native Gaelic speakers with limited command of English. The hired labourer always

dined with the family and somehow was given a bed in the family home – despite the size of our family. As a young boy, I thought this was normal, but afterwards I learned that many big farmers gave them accommodation and meals in the farm buildings.

The Strong Man Tom

One of these men was Tom O'Malley, a very big man, who liked nothing better than playing tricks on the two youngest of the family. Tom was a gentle giant. At that time, fertilizer was delivered in jute sacks with 16 stone in each sack. When most men were staggering under one sack on his back, Tom would take a sack under each arm. We had a beautiful collie sheep dog and she followed Tom everywhere, except to Mass on Sunday. After Mass, Tom would have several pints and the dog would meet him on his return, barking along with him from the main road along the avenue into the house. Lunch would have been long over before Tom would arrive, but mother always had a cooked chicken left in the back kitchen for Tom. Tom would consume almost everything; including the ribs of the chicken, but the dog under the table would get the big bones, legs and backbone. It was a sight and sound to behold.

I remember Tom saying to a neighbour "I would work for that woman (mother) for nothing", being respected means so much to those on the lower ladder of society. Tom worked for many years at home. The lovely collie dog got poisoned, by poison on a neighbour's farm, put out to poison foxes. Tom went on the drink, bereaving and he packed his bag and I never saw him again – what a wonderful gentle giant. We all missed him very much – he was almost part of the family.

The "Tinkers"

The travellers were always referred to as tinkers. These were the days before plastic buckets and basins etc. Many of them were skilled tin-smiths, none better than Eddie Ward. Eddie retired and got a house in Tuam. My eldest sister Mary, who lost her husband aged 52 years, leaving her with twelve children, told me she had a big baking tin, which, as you can imagine, was overworked and the bottom became worn. She thought of Eddie Ward and found where he lived in Tuam. She drove to Tuam with the baking tin and asked Eddie if he could fix it? "Of course" said Eddie and with the usual tools he had a new bottom in the tin in quick time. She was delighted and asked what she owed him for that? To which he replied "Nothing Mary, your mother was so good to us, when we were on the roadside, that I owe you more than a new bottom in the baking tin".

That was our mother, and the one regret I have is that I did not sit down with her, and tell her what a wonderful person she was, and what a very hard life she endured. Looking back now, in my old age, I regret that omission, which she would have appreciated.

My Own Career

During holiday periods from Ballyfin and from University, I was immediately plunged into farming and agricultural contracting – usually ploughing, cutting hay or corn. By 1955 we had two tractors, mowers and a combined harvester, the first in Connaught.

There was substantial borrowing; machinery had to be worked for as many hours as possible, when it was not raining, including Sundays. I remember harvesting wheat the day Galway footballers were playing Cork in the All Ireland final of 1956. I could tell Galway was doing well when men listening to the radio were throwing their hats in the air. Galway won. Purcell and Stockwell – a very small, light man, created havoc for Cork. Stockwell scored 2 goals and 5 points, the highest score ever for one man in a 60 minute All-Ireland. How I would have loved to be there, but work came first.

A few boys, who played with me and

against me, played in that all Ireland – Eric Ryan, Frank Ivers, Mick Greally, Jackie Coyle etc. The following evening as I drove the combine towards Ballinasloe, I met the cavalcade of cars with the victorious team and the All-Ireland cup. While harvesting on a farm near Ballinasloe, my brother Padraic was in town and met one of my fellow class mates who told him that I had got honours in my final college exam. Somebody arrived to give me the good news. "Good" I said, "but we must finish this field this evening".

Fifty years later I met a man called Nicholas Hughes, a retired Solicitor from near Ballinasloe now living in Cork. As we were talking, I remembered cutting corn for a Mrs. Hughes near Ballinasloe. By any chance I said to Nicholas, did I cut wheat for your mother? No he said you cut wheat for my aunt and I can tell you how I remember it. Somebody came to tell you that you had got honours in your degree and you just said good, come on lads we have to finish this job this evening" Well that's how things were, at least in my situation, no time for celebrations.

Our next job was on the Dublin side of Ballinasloe. I was driving along harvesting, when I heard shouting from the man who was handling the jute sacks into which the grain was flowing. He had his hand in the air and blood all over it. I stopped the tractor but left the combine ticking over. I could see the top of his finger going round on a chain, similar to a bicycle chain. I stopped the machine, got some kind of piece of cloth, which I tied gently around the finger and hand. Then I put him into the car, drove him into Portiuncula Hospital just a few miles away and dropped him into the accident and emergency. From that day to this I never heard a word from him or the farmer. I can only presume that he concluded it was his fault and that was that. If it had happened today, the legal eagles would have a field day. My youngest brother Ignatius was my helper during all this harvesting work.

I continued working Eastwards where the crops were later ripening. East of Athlone, I worked for Peter Killeen, a very important man in the NFA., now the IFA. Peter's son subsequently studied agriculture. He became the Chief Executive of the IAWS (Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society). It is now a very large international company, having bought up companies like Cuisine de France and many other companies. His late father Peter would have been very proud of him. This was my last contracting job. As I got ham sandwiches on every farm I worked on day after day – good food, but so monotonous, that I did not eat ham sandwiches for years afterwards.

Chapter 5 – Working life

First Job

I got a letter from the Local Appointments Commission, in O'Connell Street, Dublin, in October 1956, inviting me to interview for a post in the new Agr. Research Institute which was being set up in Johnstown Castle, Wexford.

The interview was a mere formality. They seemed more interested in my proficiency in the Irish language than my knowledge of agriculture. The job offer came in October and I was on my way into a new and easier life. A letter of an offer of a job at Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford arrived, and I immediately accepted. In the same month my eldest brother Padraic married his girlfriend, Mona Collins a farmer's daughter, from a family of fourteen.

At this stage my eldest sister Mary had married Joe O'Brien and already had a few children. Bridie the second girl in the family was married in California and Margaret the third daughter in the family was married near Roscommon town.

Walter had qualified as an Engineer and was working in County Louth. Subsequently, he joined the Irish Army. Una was living with Aunt Delia and preparing to go to Boston. Lily was training for nursing in England. Ignatius was still on the farm.

Finally there was Joan, the girl who nearly died with Diphtheria in 1942. She went with her friend, Master O'Regan's daughter to St. Louis Boarding School in Monaghan. Joan was a very bright girl, probably the brightest member of the family. Unfortunately she got Rheumatic fever twice, which finished her school days. Subsequently she took shorthand/typing and got a job with the Department of Agriculture. Shortly afterwards she got a post with FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation) of the United Nations in Rome. She fell in love with Rome, its history, culture, architecture – everything. She became fluent in

Joan Raftery - unknown date

Italian, French, German and Spanish and her fluency in Irish never waned. Unfortunately she was left with a damaged heart, from the rheumatic fever.

Johnstown Castle

In the Autumn I took a train to Dublin and then a train to Wexford, where I booked into White's Hotel. The following morning I made my way to Johnstown Castle, where I greeted by a number of my classmates and Aidan Conway from the 1955 graduate class.

We were amongst the first group of University Graduates recruited to set up the new Agricultural Research Institute. Prior to this, whatever little Agricultural research which was done, was in the Department of Agriculture and the Faculty of Agriculture in UCD.

Johnstown Castle had already a soils research laboratory run by the Department of Agriculture, under the direction of Dr. Tom Walsh, a renowned soils scientist.

The Agricultural Research Institute became a separate body, from the Department of Agriculture, which was a Government Department, implementing Government poli-

cy. The Director of this new body was Dr. Tom Walsh, himself a loyal Wexford man.

At that time Irish Agriculture was very backward, with very low output per acre and per animal. This was particularly so in the case of dairying. Most farmers had ceased school at 14 years and low crop yields were very often due to mineral deficiency in our soils, particularly calcium deficiency, an element which was there in abundance in our limestone deposits.

Demonstration plots, set up by scientists from Johnstown, showing the improved yields, where acidic soils were treated with lime motivated farmers to have their soils tested. Agricultural advisors, throughout the country encouraged farmers to have their soils sampled and these samples were forwarded to the laboratory in Johnstown.

The results of applying ground limestone to acidic soils were dramatic particularly for sugar beet, wheat and grass swards.

Agricultural advisors, conducted night classes, throughout the length and breath of the country and the Young Farmers Association encouraged young people to attend these classes. The Agricultural Advisors were kept up-to-date by the soils research from Johnstown, Subsequently the Agricultural Institute set up research centres for Dairying in Fermoy, Tillage Crops in Carlow, Beef production, Grange Co. Meath, Sheep in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo etc.

Such was the state of our farming, before research and education, that our main exports were live cattle and dead rabbits, plus tens of thousands of unskilled workers who left school at 14 years, many of them from the Gaeltacht areas where they had little grasp of the English language. The book "The Men Who Built Britain" details the hardship of these poor immigrants and how many of them, in their old age, ended up in poverty and misery. Of course, there were a minority who did very well, and set up their own companies, but by and large, it's a very sad story and a sad reflection on our political and church leaders. It seems to have been a situation of "Out of sight, out of mind".

Then there was another category of immigrants, our university trained graduates, who went to the USA, Canada, Britain and elsewhere. A retired lady medical graduate told me that of the entire medical graduates of UCC, in 1955 all but two of them emigrated. Some of course, returned but I know from the UCC Graduates Association, large numbers of medics, engineers, scientists etc., can be found overseas. I met many of them, and almost all of them emigrated because they saw no future in their homeland, and by the time we got Dr. Whitaker and Sean Lamass to transform our education and economy, they had their own families, friends and jobs, overseas, too late to return, however much they wished to do so.

Experience in Johnstown

We were scarcely settled in when we had a visit from the Martins GAA club, inviting us to join and play for the club. Aidan Conway, a good Wexford man convinced me to play football for the Martins, just when I had believed that my playing days were over. Sometime, in 1957, I agreed, reluctantly. As I was not affiliated to any other club, I was legal but quite a number of those lands in Johnstown were playing for their clubs at home and were therefore illegal, so they played under assumed names. One of the boys, named Maguire, was a midfield county player for Kildare, so he played under the name Hickey. The supporters, getting a bit confused were shouting "go on Hickey Maguire" much to our amusement. Before the county final I had re-located back to Dublin but was prevailed upon to come back to play in the final which we won. This was very definitely my last game, as I realised that with my stature, I could go no further. I am grateful for the opportunities I got at Ballyfin and Johnstown, to play Gaelic games and I was very pleased to see some of my colleagues of those days, go on to win All Ireland

medals. My appetite for watching most sports especially GAA games and rugby never waned. The coming of television was a real bonus, in that respect, especially as I grew older.

Meeting my Future Wife

While in Johnstown, Dr. Walsh asked me to attend some conferences, which as far as I could see, had no relevance to the soils research work in Johnstown Castle. The first conference I attended was in Cork and it was about wool, yes sheep's wool.

It was held in the Dairy Science lecture theatre, a beautiful small theatre in a cut limestone building. The limestone in Cork is much lighter in colour than Galway limestone, which is rather dark as can be seen in Galway City.

Little did I realise then that I would eventually spend most of my working career in this lovely building.

As a boy, growing up on a sheep farm, I had some knowledge of wool, but this meeting gave me a whole new appreciation of the various different types of wool, from different sheep breeds. None of the synthetic fibres could match the unique quality of wool, but of course, synthetic fibres can be produced more cheaply and hence they have come to dominate the markets.

At that time there was a number of small woollen mills in Cork. We visited a number of them, and I found their contribution very interesting. Unfortunately they have ceased to exist, due to the arrival of new fibres.

The next mission I was sent on was to take a New Zealand scientist to the peat land research station in Glenamoy in North Co. Mayo, a very remote area. A colleague of mine described its remoteness as follows "Glenamoy – its five miles from a pint of Guinness and forty miles to Ballina for a haircut".

I met the New Zealand scientist and his wife in Dublin and set out for Glenamoy in my Volkswagen Beetle.

New Zealand is roughly five times the size of Ireland, so this trip did not faze them. It turned out he was an expert on aerial fertilization, so the trip from Dublin to Glenamoy was rather uninteresting in terms of aerial fertilization. They were, however, impressed by the Shannon River, particularly, when I told them it was the longest river in Britain and Ireland.

Not surprisingly, he was curious to know why so much good work was going on to grow grass on bogland, having seen so much dry land, as we drove from Dublin through excellent dry land producing, as the late James Dillon TD said "as little as was possible under an Irish sky". Well, I had no plausible answer to that, and I still have no explanation as to why that was happening other than lack of education. From Glenamoy, I came back through Linnane and Spiddal and into Galway City. The contrast between the hills, heather and lakes, west of Galway City to the flat grassland just east of the city amazed him. Such variation in landscape in Ireland is something we take for granted, but foreigners love it.

An acquaintance of mine took his father to Canada, as we worked for Carling-O'Keeffe breweries. His father was a farmer from North Tipperary. Following their return I asked the old man how he liked Canada. He just grabbed his pipe from his mouth and with venom he said "mile after mile after mile of f....g nothing, day after day". Clearly he missed the wonderful variety we have, which we do not fully appreciate.

I took my visitors back to their hotel in Dublin, where they thanked me and later I got a postcard from them, from Hong Kong.

My next assignment was to attend a conference on sheep production in the Agricultural College in Athenry, which meant I could overnight in my old home. There were a number of meetings in the College,

but we all dined in the same dining hall. At lunch, I was sitting opposite this beautiful red-head with a magnetic smile. We exchanged small talk and she told me she was from Kilkenny so that, I thought, was that.

However, we were to meet again at the Spring Show. At that time the Spring Show, in Ballsbridge, was the major farming event of the year. I invited her to go to the Ags. Dance that evening and we arranged to meet beforehand. She arrived on time, with bad news. Her uncle-in-law had died suddenly in Kilkenny, aged 57 years and she had to return home immediately. I went on to the Ags dance, which brought back some fond memories and I met some of my former colleagues there.

I was to meet her again at an agricultural show, in South Kilkenny and from there we started dating. She was now working as a poultry science advisor for Kilkenny County Council, in South Kilkenny and living in Waterford. I was still working in Johnstown Castle and living in Wexford about fifty miles apart, but soon I was to take up work at the Albert College Dublin, which made meeting a little more difficult. However, we persisted.

Next Job

In February 1958 Dr. Ruane, who had been in the Agricultural College in Athenry was appointed Professor of Farm Management in UCD, with his office in the Albert Agricultural College, Glasnevin, Dublin. He contacted me and invited me to see him in Dublin. I was going to Dublin for another function, the farm of the year competition and the home farm at Coshla was nominated as the best run farm in Ireland for the year ended 1957. Having worked so hard there, I was naturally very proud and very pleased for Padraic and his wife Mona, but particularly for my mother who kept the farm going when we were all children.

Professor Ruane was at the function. He issued an invitation to me to take up a post in his Department in the Agricultural Faculty and had no hesitation in doing so. The pay was poor but the experience was great and, of course, living in Dublin was a real bonus. I loved Dublin, when I was there as a student, getting round on my bicycle and going to Croke Park. Now I had my own car, which was a real step up, but my girlfriend Bredhe Bennett had a bigger car, for her work.

We agreed to marry in September 1958. Her parents were pleased and my mother was extremely pleased, as she liked Bredhe and her family and, coming from a farm, she could relate to them in a way that she could not with city people.

Wedding and Honeymoon

The wedding was in St. Johns Church in Kilkenny in September 1958. Her brother Fr. Bill officiated and the meal was in Carlow, as there was nothing available in Kilkenny on the date which was fixed. The honeymoon was planned for the Isle of Man.

I had rented house near the Albert College and lived in it for some months before the marriage. It lacked modern comforts and

Our wedding with Fr Bill officiating

was really a poor quality house, in what was then a good area. As a bachelor, I took some short cuts in cooking and cleaning. To minimize the washing up, I took the pan to the table, thereby cutting down on dish-washing. The plan after the wedding was to stay in this house before flying to the Isle of Man the next day.

As I had never been out of the country before, I made the mistake of purchasing Irish postage stamps for the postcards to be sent home from the Isle of Man. Recipients of these cards had to pay the postage. They were not too pleased.

Neither of us had ever been on a plane, so we were a bit nervous. The plane was an old fashioned Douglas DC3 which carried about 30-40 people. We stayed in a modest hotel in the capital Douglas, a quaint little town, with horse drawn trams. On emerging from the hotel, next morning we meet a class mate from Ballyfin, Jim Griffin, from Wexford. Jim I said "this is my wife" and at this stage Jim and myself began to laugh. It was the first time that he or I referred to our girl friends as wives. Subsequently, Jim became a Bank Manager and regrettably he had a premature death.

We were extremely happy on the honeymoon but on arrival back to Dublin we were penniless. We had however a wedding present – a cheque in the sum of £5.00 from Aidan Coway, but it was Saturday, so the banks were shut. However, a barman, in a local pub was kind enough to risk cashing the cheque so we did not go hungry on our first weekend as man and wife in the rental home in Ballymun.

Work in Albert College

My duties were varied, from supervising farm workers, to demonstrating and lecturing to students as well as supervising some research. I found myself lecturing to a number of boys who were in Ballyfin with me. Some fell behind me, for a variety of reasons, such as illness and all had to attend agricultural colleges. It was a little embarrassing and challenging, but I can truly say that I never had the slightest difficulty with any of them.

Part of my work was supervising wheat variety trials. This was funded by the Irish Flour Millers. A range of varieties were sown on different sites throughout the country. The yields, disease resistance, flour quality and bread quality were all measured. To help in this project, I got a good Cork man with a degree in agriculture and a fine record on the football field. He was Paddy Murphy who played senior football with Cork at All-Ireland level. He was truly a joy to work with, and Bredhe and I loved his company on social occasions. We accidently met him in O'Connell Street one Saturday evening. He invited us to join him going to the cinema and as I remember, the film was Darby O'Gill and the Little People – Jimmy O'Dea played the part. After the picture we took him home for the tea and he provided us with stories about people from his part of the country, which neither of us had ever visited.

One of the sites on which we had the wheat trials was at the Cistercian College, Roscrea. Paddy and I stayed in the Cistercian Guest House when working there. A

Brother Albrick looked after us very well, too well on one occasion. As we were having our lunch Brother Albrick came in and produced a bottle of whiskey from the brown habit. "Where did you get that?" we enquired. He just laughed and said there is a wedding here today and they had too much drink. Naturally Paddy and I had a great evening. Afterwards Brother Albrick admitted that he had been an alcoholic, before joining the Order and "alcohol is no problem he said if you know when to stop". He was a great character and a joy to meet. We had no contact with the Cistercian priests.

During one of my visits to Roscrea I saw an advertisement for light opera in the Town Hall, Roscrea. Although I had no training in music, I had got addicted to classical music. This was something I would never admit to my student colleagues, as they were into Rock and Roll etc. I can still remember when and where I was when I first heard the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves. Likewise, I can remember when and where I was when I first heard the Grand March from Aida. As a student, in the Albert, I skipped some classes and queued at the Metropole Cinema, O'Connell Street for the first showing of the film of Madam Butterfly. So naturally, I drove into Roscrea where accidently I met some of the Brothers from Ballyfin and a past student Gerry Dolan, who were always promoting classical music as a student, only to be laughed at by his colleagues. Gerry naturally, was directing proceedings.

Following the music, we got together with the Brothers and Gerry and some of his friends. The net result was that I got back to the Guest House at 2am only to find that I was locked out. However, the lights were on fully in the monastery. I managed to get in by climbing a high wall and after trial and error I found a stairs which got me to my bedroom.

In the morning, I asked Bro. Albrick why the lights in the Monastery were on a 2am. To my surprise he said "we get up to pray and go back to bed again". He may have said they get up twice each night to pray – what a cruel way to live, I thought.

The Albert College was gradually being surrounded by surburban housing. This caused considerable problems with incursion of children and dogs. Livestockwere being harassed and bales of straw etc., set on fire by the teenagers.

Experiments were destroyed in areas near the new housing, expecially in the fields near Larkhill housing Estate. It was clear that this could not continue, and with more and more housing it would only get worse. Professor Ruane discussed the possibility of acquiring a farm outside the suburbs of the city, but nothing suitable came on the market.

Parting with Paddy

Some months later Paddy came into my office in the Albert College. He did not have the usual smile. "Tom", he said, "you will need to get somebody else for this job, I will be leaving shortly". "I am very sorry to hear that Paddy" and I asked, "where are you off to?" "I am going to become a priest, he said". I got a fit of laughing, but there was no laugh from Paddy. I realised he was serious. "I am joining the Cistercians or the Capuchins, what do you think Tom?" "Well", I said "I know nothing about the Capuchins, but I would not like to see you in the Cistercians" (I was thinking of them praying in the small hours). "Right" said Paddy, "I will take your advice and go for the Capuchins". After a few minutes, I asked Paddy when did he get the idea of becoming a Priest. Paddy smiled and said it was something that occurred in the middle of an All-Ireland final. "I looked around from the pitch, where I saw 80,000 spectators shouting their heads off at 30 grown men kicking a bag of air from one end of the field to the other and the thought occurred to me that there must be something more important in life, and that thought continued to haunt me", he said.

I had no answer and he left the room.

When I went home and told Bredhe, she could scarcely believe it. Paddy then invited Bredhe and myself for a meal in the Autobahn bar in Glassnevin. I thought it would just be the three of us, but I was wrong. He had footballers from many parts of the country, but no other woman which left Bredhe feeling like a fish out of water. A considerable quantity of Guinness was consumed, before we were called to dinner, which was large steaks all round and Paddy was in really great form.

At closing time Paddy said "take me to the Royal Oak", which was a pub that could remain open until 2am., (I think) "I have a whole lifetime to make up for" he said. I dropped him with a few others at the Royal Oak and drove home. Next morning, his last day at work, he looked pretty sick, so I wished him well and told him to go back to bed.

Some years later we holidayed in Donegal and Bredhe remembered that the Capuchins had a novitiate at Ards in Donegal. We drove up to the novitiate and asked if Paddy Murphy was there. "Are you related to him?" Was the first question. "No" I said, but explained the background. Paddy appeared, delighted to see us. We went for a walk, but he was rather quiet and serious, not the Paddy I knew and admired.

We left, rather subdued and sad and we lost all contact with him. Approximately, twelve years later, when we were living in Cork I was driving home from College, I saw a figure, in a brown habit, with a red head and red beard coming towards me. I slowed down and sure enough it was Paddy. I opened the car door and invited him to sit in and invited him to come out home for tea and to meet Bredhe. He agreed and Bredhe was delighted to see him, but also a little shocked by his appearance. What would you like to eat she enquired? Something soft" He said" I have just been to the dentist" "Did you have some fillings?" I asked, "No", he said "I had six teeth extracted". "My God" I said were they all bad?" No" he said "but I'm on missions in Africa and they might go bad before I get home again" He dined with some difficulty.

Suddenly I thought of Rev. Fr. Brendan the Professor of Philosophy in UCC and Head of the Capuchin Order in Ireland. Professor Brendan had taken a year out at UCC. "Did Brendan call to see you in Africa" I enquired. Paddy began to laugh saying Brendan got a rude awakening when he saw the conditions out there. To make matters worse, Brendan was offered a lift by Africans, in some kind of vehicle, as he was travelling to visit another Capuchin Priest. On the way, a pregnant woman, in the old wagon, went into labour. The wagon stopped, all out, the child was born at the roadside and the umbilical cord cut by an axe, amongst great rejoicing and all packed in again to continue the journey, including Brendan. "I believe he went on the drink after Africa" said Paddy, laughing. I dropped him back to the Capuchins and he was very grateful for everything, as usual a real gentleman.

Roughly 20 years later, after Bredhe got a serious brain haemorrhage, he called. At first I did not recognize him – he was so old and worn looking. There was no word from him after Bredhe died in 2007, so perhaps he too had passed away. I was privileged to know such a lovely gentleman.

Fota – the beginning

In 1959, when we were still living in Dublin, Bredhe suggested a motoring holiday in Cork and Kerry. That appealed to me, as they were two places I wished to see – Cobh the port from which most of my relatives emigrated and many of them never returned, and Killarney, which was such a magnet for overseas visitors.

We stayed in a very good Bed and Breakfast on Donovan's Road, adjacent to UCC, where I subsequently spent most of my working life. On a Sunday morning, after mass and a good breakfast, we set out for Cobh. On the way I saw this walled estate.

The first beautiful entrance gate and gate lodge was an exact copy of the main entrance to Ballyfin, except that on the pillars in Fota there were large dogs, whereas in Ballyfin there was large birds – Coots – as the family in Ballyfin were named Coote.

As the last gate, adjacent to Belvelly Bridge, a man was closing the gate. I jumped from my car saying "any chance of seeing this estate?" He just closed the gate saying "private property sir" - in a tone that was not very friendly. Well, neither he nor I could have foreseen at 15 years later I would be his boss. On to Cobh we went, to find a small, sleepy town with a magnificent Cathedral, designed by the famous Architect Pugin. The view from the Cathedral, high above the beautiful harbour, was spoilt by a very ugly and dirty steel mill. We returned to Cork, where I was told that the walled estate was named Fota and it was owned by a Mrs. Dorothy Bell, who was originally a Smyth-Barry, before Major Bell married into the property.

We set out for Kerry, via Bantry, as I wished to see Garnish Island at Glengarriff, which was truly stunning and in a very beautiful setting. From there to Kenmare and on to the Ring of Kerry. When we got as far as Sneem, I was concerned about accommodation, as the evening was getting on. We went into a little house where tea was served. Having the tea, I enquired if Waterville was far away, as I was worried about getting accommodation. The woman of the house assured me that it was at least a half-hour drive. Any accommodation here? I enquired. "Well ye can stay here, if ye are married", she said. I assured her "we were "– "Ye on honeymoon?" "No", I replied. "Ye look too young to be married". "I know", I said. She saw us to the bedroom, which was a small but comfortable. We took a stroll in the little village and as we went to bed she said "You will be having your breakfast next door, with my sister, and what would you like for breakfast?" Bredhe said "I would like a fresh boiled egg". "Look out the window there and see the hens for yourself. The eggs will be collected before the breakfast, so you can't get fresher than that".

In the morning, we went next door to a breakfast of beautiful brown bread and two of the freshest brown eggs I had ever tasted. Fortunately her sister was less inquisitive. Sneem became better known, in later years, because President de Gaulle stayed in the local hotel at Parknasilla and our own late President O'Dalaigh is buried there.

Many years later we visited Sneem again and the little quiet village had become a busy tourist stop. A fine limestone bust of President deGaulle adorns the little squire in Sneem and busloads of tourists were in evidence. I thought of the brown eggs and sleeping in one house and going for breakfast next door. I tried to find the houses, but all had changed. The pleasant memories linger on though.

Waterville was much nearer than she had led us to believe, but we were happy to have stayed in Sneem. We drove on around the ring of Kerry, which is a truly beautiful trip and onto Killarney, which I had so looked forward to. Alas, the town of Killarney was a big disappointment, with a motley lot of horses pulling a varied lot of traps, sidecars and other vehicles, loaded with tourists, mainly from the USA. The smell of horse droppings appeared to be everywhere. The town itself was not very attractive, with almost every house having a bed and breakfast sign. We did not dwell there more than one hour. I drove to some beauty spots near Killarney before heading north to Tralee and Listowel, where we stayed for a night before going to Ballybunnion. In those days, great writers such as John B. Keane, Bryan McMahon, Brendan Kennelly and Seamus Wilmot all from North Kerry, were still not as well known as they became subsequently.

In later years, when I was doing Adult Education lectures from UCC, in North Kerry, I always visited John B. Keane's pub, not so much for the pint of Guinness, but for the

stories he had – free entertainment.

Chapter 6 – First few years in Dublin and abroad

European trip

In 1960 Professor Ruane acquired funds for me to travel and study European agricultural research and practices – particularly in Holland, Denmark, Germany and Sweden. The law of the land at the time said that when a woman married, she had to stop working. I presume the Government and the Bishops concluded that they should be at home producing and rearing children.

As we had no children yet Bredhe took courses in dress design and oil painting, hobbies she enjoyed for the remainder of her life. Being free to travel she accompanied me to Germany, where we had a contact, Annie Muckenheim, in the Agricultural Research and Advisory Office in Bad Godesberg, just south of the then Capital, Bonn. We flew from Dublin to London and flying over England I saw the M1, the first real motorway in Britain. From London we flew to Dusseldorf and from there we got a train to Bad Godesberg. Annie had arranged accommodation and organized a job for Bredhe, minding the children of aa American citizen, who was working for the US occupying forces on the Rhine. That left me free to get on with my work. The people I was dealing with were polite, but very formal. Also, every day had to be planned in detail, the previous day. Punctuality was a must, unlike the casual timekeeping I was accustomed to at home. That particular part of Germany – The Rhineland and Bavaria were very Catholic areas, unlike Prussia which was largely Protestant. During Easter Week there were many religious festivities, with processions carrying banners and the carrying of the Cross etc., with much more enthusiasm than at home. Church bells rang out loudly on Sunday mornings – even louder and more frequently than in Ireland, and the priests celebrated mass facing the people rather than having their backs to them, which made for a nice change.

The legacy of the war was to be seen everywhere, not so much in the buildings which were mostly restored, but rather in the people, where so many had lost limbs and eyes. The more seriously injured, of course, and those who were insane from the war were out of view, in State care.

I was unable to get back to Bonn regularly to meet Bredhe. Curiously when we did meet, we found that the cheapest place to eat out was Bonn railway station.

Southern Germany

Travelling south, I saw a very different landscape and very different people. Bavarians' were and are a very proud people. They have their own style of dress, with lederhosen (leather short trousers) and Bravarian hats with a feather in them. Ladies clothes too were different and more colourful than in the northern parts. It was the difference in their homes that was most striking, with roofs overhanging the walls of the house. This of course, was for the snow falls in winter, keeping the doorways and windows relatively free of snow.

From a farming view point, there was little of interest to bring to Ireland.

From Munich I set out for the research station at Hohenheim, which was east of Stuttgart. Football fever was high in Stuttgart, as Germany were playing in some important match, on the Sunday and the City seemed dead as they were all probably watching the match on television.

I went out to an Agricultural Show, by train, approximately twenty miles from the city. It was not very unlike the Agricultural Show in Athenry, in many ways, except for the opening where we got a rendering of the Grand March from the opera, Aida and a closing of the show with a fly over of USA military jet fighter planes, rather a strange way I thought to start and end an agricultural show. Beside me, one man said to another, in German of course, if only we

had those planes in the war. Thank God, I said to myself, that you did not have them.

Hohenheim Research centre was of great interest to me and the staff could not have been more helpful. I went back to Hohenheim again after moving to work in UCC, to see some new developments in milking machines. I was accompanied by Mr. Michael Cowhig of the Agricultural Research Station at Moorepark, Fermoy. Michael was a very fine tall man and an outstanding sportsman, until he got polio, while studying at Reading University. He had completed a masters degree with me, but alas he lost his life when the Aer Lingus plane went down off Tuscar Rock. His body was the only male body recovered. At least that was some little consolation for his wife and family.

I tried, in vain, to have his M.Sc., Degree conferred posthumously, as it had already been approved by the extern examiner. Michael was a pioneer in the development of milking machines and a gentleman who was loved and respected, particularly by the farming community.

From Hoehenheim, I went north to a research centre at Braunweigh just east Hanover, where there was research on the conservation of grass for winter feeding. Hanover was a city which was so badly damaged during the war that the City Fathers decided to level what was left and design and build a completely new city. Models of the old and new city were on display in the Town Hall.

I was informed that people, after their normal days work, went out voluntarily, after the evening meal to help in the demolition of the old city and rebuilding of the new city. It was an amazing example of what a determined people could do.

Berlin

As my visit to the research centre was interrupted by a bank holiday weekend, I was at a loss to know what I should do. One of the research workers, who was concerned about the growing influence of the Soviet Union, encouraged me to visit West Berlin – Just a short flight away. Going by road or rail would involve all sorts of difficulties at the border between East and West Germany.

I arrived after a 30 minute flight into the Templehof airport and got a bus into West Berlin City. Suddenly there was all sorts of panic and excitement. People were rushing to see the TV news in shop windows and in their homes. The news was bad. The American U2 spy plane, which flew regularly over Russia, at heights were which were out of range of Russian missiles had been brought down by a new missile and the pilot, Garry Powers, was paraded before the TV cameras and beamed to most of the world. The following morning churches were full and silence fell on the city in West Berlin.

The city of Berlin had been divided after the war, with West Berlin, an island of democracy, within East Germany which was a Communist State, under Soviet rule. Stalin decided he would force West Berlin into the Soviet sphere of influence by blockading all road, rail and casual access to the West Berlin in 1947. He thought he could starve them into submission, but the Western allies decided to aid the beleaguered people in West Berlin. This led to the greatest air lift in history. All the necessities of life, such as food, fuel – mainly coal, etc., were flown into Templehof Airport. A plane landed and took off again approximately every 10 minutes. This continued for almost 18 months in 1948-49 until Stalin relented and lifted the barriers to road rail and casual access to the city again. The people of West Berlin felt very vulnerable, until the fall of communism in 1989.

The success of the new Soviet missile, which brought down the US spy plane, raised the tension in West Berlin and I was glad to fly back to Hanover again on Monday evening. On returning to the research station, I discussed the whole issue with a number of the scientists. One of them

predicted that Russia would soon have to worry about their big neighbour in the East – China. Within months there were several Chinese incursions into Soviet territory and battles occurred between Russian and Chinese troops. Thankfully it did not develop into a full scale war.

After Hanover, I went back to Bad Godesberg to join Bredhe for a break, but instead of a break there was a letter from Professor Ruane requesting that I come back to help with their summer examinations.

Return to Germany

Following the exams I returned to Bredhe in Bad Godesberg. Bad Godesberg is on the western side of the great river Rhine and south of Bonn. The traffic of Barges going north and south, in this great river, was amazing and all the time there was passenger ferries going east and west transporting cars and people.

Annie Muckenheim pointed to a house with a large rose garden on the eastern side of the Rhine, telling us that it was the home of Chancellor Konrad Adenaur and that Adenaur had a hobby of growing roses.

As I had a few free days I decided that we would take a ferry to get to the eastern side and get nearer to Adenaur's home and rose garden. It was a beautiful sunny as we walked to the higher ground to get a better view of the Rhine and the famous rose garden. Having viewed the scene we lay on the grass and did what young loving couples do before some sunbathing. Next day we took a trip down the Rhine to Koblenz and back again. The hillside on the west of the Rhine was completely planted with vines where they got maximum coverage of sunshine. On leaving the ferry there was numerous small vineries, where visitors were invited to taste the wines. A person could get drunk going around free tasting, but I prefer beer myself and Bredhe did not like that much wine. Nevertheless, it was all very new and a very interesting experience.

Denmark

My next appointment was in Denmark. I travelled by train through the industrial heartland of the Ruhr. The plumes of polluting smoke were not pretty – in fact they were blotting out the sun. Entry to Denmark - border controls were then in place all over Europe – was simple. The Green Passport was always welcome. It was early afternoon, as I went to meet my contact there, to get the programme for the next day. He just looked at me and said "you look tired" "Take a rest in your hotel and we will discuss it in the morning". After months in Germany, where every move for the next day was planned, in detail, including coffee breaks, this informality was very welcome. It reminded me of home, but unlike home the cleanliness, order and efficiency was evident everywhere. However, like the Irish, a great sense of humour was also evident. I loved the food in Denmark – especially their fresh fish.

As a catholic boy growing up we had no meat on Friday. Fish for Friday, but I hated the fish, which was invariably herring, which were rarely fresh and always bony. In Denmark the processed raw herring was absolutely delicious. I can never understand why herring, in Ireland, is not processed as it is in Scandinavia. In recent years I attended a wedding reception in Sweden where there was a large number of Irish guests. The Irish simply loved the processed herring, but I never got an answer to the question why we did not process the herring as they do in Scandinavia. The manager of one milk processing plant told me his most profitable business was bottling water and selling it to the US forces stationed in the Rhineland in Germany. The idea of people buying bottled water amused me, given the amount of rain which falls for free from the sky. Twelve months later, I saw bottled water for sale in Galway city – a city that gets 40 to 60 inches of rain each year was even more amazing to me, who was born and reared 10 miles from Galway and the water harvested off the roofs in the farmyard sup-

plied all the family the cattle and the pigs etc.

Following a few visits to research stations in Denmark, I travelled to Lund in Sweden, where I wished to see the memorial to Carl Linnaeus, one of the great scientists of his time and perhaps of all time. He introduced the systematic classification upon which all subsequent natural history has been built, and he used Latin, as Latin was a dead language so the naming and classification would not change with time.

Farming in southern Sweden was very similar to Denmark due to the similarity of the soils and climate.

Back to Ireland

I had to get back for lectures, starting in September. The Irish Grassland Society invited me to speak at their winter meeting, about my time in Europe. At that time the productivity from our grassland, particularly dairy farming was abysmal, by European standards. I pinpointed a few of the reasons for this.

Firstly the majority of our cows were shorthorns. This breed was promoted by the Department of Agriculture as a good dual purpose breed, good for beef and good for milk. In fact, this breed had been discarded elsewhere, especially in Britain.

The second reason was the very poor quality of winter feeding – predominantly hay, which was cut when very mature and hence of low digestibility.

The third was short lactations, due to late spring calving, which was in turn related to the low quality of winter feeding.

I had a projector and slides to support the case I was making. I suggested a target of at least 1000 gallons per cow each lactation. Those with autumn calving cows and supplying the liquid milk trade agreed, while those with late spring calving cows, supplying the creameries, though such a target was crazy.

At that meeting was Dr. Henry Kennedy, Secretary of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) subsequently ICOS the Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society. Dr. Kennedy who had long been a critic of our dairying industry agreed with my conclusion. He subsequently invited me to his office in Merrion Square for further discussion and invited me to write a series of articles far a little magazine which he edited and circulated to creameries throughout the country. I obliged, but got very limited feedback.

Professor Ruane, who had worked for the Department of Agriculture and had a herd of Shorthorn cows when he was Director of the Agricultural College in Athenry showed his approval as follows. He called me into his office where he showed me a large advertisement for a sale of Friesian cows in Belfast. He instructed me to go and buy any I considered to be good cows, if the prices were reasonable. I brought one of the farm staff with me.

I recognised one buyer, a Mr. John O'Neill, a successful dairy farmer from Armagh. John, in addition to running a dairy farm and bottling plant, was known for trading in dairy cattle. He recognised me as I had visited his farm approximately two years earlier. To all the other buyers and sellers, I was a complete stranger. This obviously confused the middle aged men, when, what appeared to them to be a young fellow of little more than 20 years, kept buying. In total, I bought about twenty five cows, at prices which would be classed as very reasonable in the South. The cows were delivered safely and they performed better than anybody had expected. Within a very short number of years the College herd was all Friesian, much to the disappointment of the livestock experts in the Department of Agriculture.

Winter fodder, too, was changed to silage and barn-dried hay. As the price of electricity went up, barn drying was abandoned – silage became the main source of feed from October to March.

Milk yields went up year on year, which made a deep impression on young Agricultural Graduates, who were going out to work amongst the farmers of Ireland.

In 1961 Prof. Ruane sent me to Britain, to study research there. The research was good, but the scale of the operations and farm gave me very few ideas appropriate to our farming scene. I did, however, meet Prof. McGregor Cooper, at Newcastle University, a New Zealand citizen, who was demonstrating to students and farmers how to reduce the cost of milk production by better grassland management and better grass conservation for winter feeding.

Problems at Home

Sometime before Christmas 1960 my wife Bredhe became very ill. Glands suddenly appeared, particularly about her neck. I took her to the GP, who became somewhat alarmed. He arranged to have her admitted to the Mater, where they suspected Hodgkin's Disease, which is some form of cancer. Following a biopsy, Hodgkin's was ruled out. They admitted defeat.

Next step was to send a sample to Harley Street and a few days later, a nurse from the Mater phoned Bredhe to tell her she had not got cancer and invited her to come to the hospital. We went in, very relieved that it was not cancer, but nervous about what it might be.

The consultant received us, and informed us that she had Toxoplasmosis. You are lucky that you are not pregnant, as the baby would be aborted or deformed, he said. Now where have you been travelling (apparently it was not present in Ireland or detected in Ireland) so I told him about our travels in Europe. Did you consume unpasteurised milk, he enquired or have you been in touch with animals there? "I believe I did not get unpasteurised milk, but I did pet many dogs and cats" she answered. Well he said, you must have got it from some of these animals. Is it serious Doctor, I enquired? To which he answered, "it won't kill you, but we know very little of the side effects. Well, I can now verify that she never enjoyed normal health between then and her death in January 2007. To what extent Toxoplasmosis contributed to that, I do not know, and the Consultants would not or could not say.

Exactly seven years later, an article in the Journal of Agricultural Science, revealed that toxoplasmosis was found in sheep at the Agricultural Research Station in Grange, Co. Meath by Dr. Sean Crowley, who was qualified in both Agriculture and Veterinary Science. I got in touch with Sean, who I knew from his days as a student, and he was really amazed that Bredhe had got this disease seven years earlier.

Toxoplasmosis is now taken very seriously by the veterinary profession in Ireland and in Spring time, the Agricultural press carry notices advising expectant mothers to avoid sheep, especially at lambing time, warning of the danger of loosing the foetus or having a deformed baby.

Buying a House

The rented house we had, although less than ten years built, had draughts coming though doors and windows, which was the result of using undried timber, which shrunk as the timber dried out.

My salary was small so the banks did not want to know me. I went into the New Ireland Assurance Co., and did a deal whereby I could get £2,800 to help buy a home. We looked at all the ads and went to view many new and used houses. A used house in Vernon Ave., Clontarf was just what we had hoped for, but of course it would cost more than we could afford. As a boy and young man, I had plenty of experience of buying and selling livestock at fares, auctions and private deals, for the home farm and subsequently for the college.

I made my first livestock purchase at the age of 10 years – I bought a pregnant goat from a man who worked on the farm for 8 shillings and 6 pence. The goat produced a beautiful kid, which I adored. The kid

grew up healthy and strong but about 4-5 months later he disappeared.

My oldest brother Padraic had killed the little animal, because he was curious about how goat meat would taste compared to lamb, which we had occasionally. I was furious, as I had hoped to sell the kid and breed the goat again. I just sold the goat to an itinerant for 8 shillings. The first lesson in dealing is to establish the right of ownership and I had not established that. It was a good lesson, which I did not forget.

The Auction

Morrissey was the Auctioneer for the Clontarf House. His rooms were just off Clare Street. It was an executor sale, as the family had died out. The room was full, standing room only. Starting at £1,800, offers going up in £50 at a time. When it reached £2,400, I shouted £2,800 and everything came to a halt. Being very small, Morrissey had no view of me, neither had most of the people as we were in the back of the room. There was a brief silence and Mr. Morrissey brought the gavel saying sold, adding "I want to see the buyer in my office". Bredhe was in a state of shock or elation saying how did I think of that. I just said "none of these people were ever at country horse fair, bluff can be useful. These people thought I was just starting".

We went into his office, and I can still see the shock on his face. We were 27 years of age, but we really looked more like 22 years, or less. "Have you a £100 deposit" he said? I said "no". "Can you get it"? He enquired. "I will try, just give me a couple of hours". "OK", he said.

I got into my little V.W. Beetle and dashed up to the Albert College, hoping to meet some staff who would give me a loan of £100. Luckily, I met Professor Ruane and asked him for the loan of £100. "For what" he said, and I told him what had happened. Are you really serious? He said, and I assured him I was. So he took out his cheque book and gave me a cheque in the sum of £100. I want that back within a month he said, no problem, I said, thanking him.

While I was looking for the @100, a widow woman, who had a good business in Dublin went into Mr. Morrissey and offered considerably more, but he rejected her offer, saying the young couple have been given my word for 24 hours.

I got back to the auction room, gave the £100 and signed up. We celebrated with a drink – a meal out was beyond our means.

House Contents

As there were no surviving family members, the contents of the house were to be auctioned off at a later date. Obviously the contents, curtains, carpets etc., would be more useful to us than to other people.

My bank account was with the Bank of Ireland in Glasnevin. I went to the Manager to get some money to purchase the contents. I was not looking for much. He enquired about security and I replied, I can get my salary paid directly into your bank. He replied "what guarantee have I that you won't leave your job? None, I replied, but my job is worth a hell of a lot more to me than the few pounds I am asking for from your bank, and with that I told him I would be taking my account elsewhere. He just shrugged his shoulders and I walked out, wondering how he got to be a bank manager.

On my way back to the Albert College, I saw a branch of the Munster and Leinster Bank in Drumcondra, near Tolka Bridge. I stopped, went in, and asked for the Manager. I was shown into his office. He looked at me, asked where I worked etc. I told him my story and he just opened a drawer, took out a document and said "just sign that". "What is that?", I enquired. That is to transfer your account to this branch, and I will give you the money you need. With that done, I left. The money was made available, and the contents cost even less than we had expected.

We moved into Vernon Avenue and were

genuinely welcomed by the neighbours. The neighbours to the left were Mr. And Mrs. Green and to the right hand side was a younger couple named Humphries, who were interested in sailing. They invited us in for a coffee and biscuits. During the evening she enquired from whom we got the milk. "Dublin Dairies", I replied. "I do too, she said and I told my milkman that I wanted the milk from the same farm each day". I struggled to prevent a laugh, knowing that roughly 20,000 gallons from hundreds of farms were all dumped into the same vat, prior to pasteurisation each day. "What did he say", I asked. "He made a note of it" she said and promised to bring her milk from the same farm every day.

Sometime later I met Victor Craigie, one of the owner-Directors of the dairy and I him asked who delivered the milk in Vernon Ave., "Why is there something wrong" he said. "No", I replied "but I think he should get a bonus for salesmanship", and then told him of the episode with the neighbour, who wanted the milk from the same farm each day, and how he left her a very happy customer. Victor could scarcely stop laughing.

Many years later I got great support from Victor when trying to convince Dublin Zoo, of which he was a former President, to help put a Wildlife Park in Fota, after I transferred to Cork.

We loved living in Clontarf which was near the sea and very importantly, near Croke Park, where I enjoyed some great games. I also took foreign visitors to Croke Park and invariably they were surprised that the followers of both teams were mingled and so well behaved. The Faculty had a visiting lecturer, Dr. Hans Larson, from Denmark, and I brought him to a hurling league game between Dublin and Kilkenny. During the game a Kilkenny forward, Dick Carroll and the Dublin corner back had some rough play. Both players discarded the hurleys, and had a fist fight, whereupon Hans jumps up clapping shouting, "We got a boxing match to!o".

The next time I visited the Agricultural Research station in Copenhagen, they were curious to know why Hans no longer attended soccer games. Hans told them of this wonder game played with a small ball and sticks, and scores were coming so fast, plus the occasional boxing match!

Wealthy Relation Arrives

Just as I had returned from work one evening in 1962 I had a phone call from a man with an American accent. "Hi Tom, this is your cousin Jim Kane from San Francisco. My wife and I would love to meet you and have dinner with you. We are staying in the Gresham. Could you drop in to join us?" Could I what, I said to myself, "Of course we would love to, and we could be there in approximately 45 minutes". "Looking forward to meeting you", he said.

I got off the phone and gave Bredhe the good news. She was overjoyed – going to the Gresham, where we could never afford to go to eat. On arrival to the Gresham Jim was there to meet us. He was much older than I had expected. Jim was the son of my mother's sister, who eloped with her boyfriend, rather than accepting an arranged marriage to an older man, as my mother did.

Jim's wife appeared much younger than Jim. By now I was pretty hungry. Another couple arrived, Bud Riley and his wife, who were very sociable people. Finally Jim's Mother-in-law arrived in rather a bad mood. "We are not eating here again tonight she announced", my heart sank "no said Jim I was give the name of a good restaurant, somewhere near Cornmarket Street – not a good area, I thought. On the way out to the taxi I enquired from the doorman about this restaurant, and he assured me it was the best. On arrival at the address the door was closed. I knocked on the door and a little sliding hatch opened, and a voice asking about the booking, and Jim answered. The door was opened, and I could see the small restaurant with the tables set.

We were guided to the table – at this stage

I would eat anything, but nobody was in a hurry. I read the menu and the prices were just astronomical, to my mind. The price of the starter here would get me an adequate meal in the local in Clontarf. The meal was wonderful, but the granny was in a foul mood, thereby spoiling an otherwise lovely experience.

It transpired that Bud Riley and his wife had four children in schools in Ireland for the duration of their time in Ireland, while they were mainly on the European mainland. The two boys were in Rockwell College in Co. Tipperary and the two girls were in Laurel Hill Convent School. During holidays they travelled with their parents in Europe and the Granny had a fulltime nurse with her in the hotel. When she got bored with the Gresham Hotel, she went to the Shelbourne Hotel and later to Jury's Hotel.

Returning Hospitality

Next time Jim, Bud and their wives returned, we invited them for lunch in our home on a Sunday, the only day I was totally free from my UCD duties. To make some conversation I asked did they see the rocket taking John Glynn into orbit, and Jim said "We sure did – we supplied the oxygen". The reason for their trip to Europe was to negotiate with various governments about the possibility of establishing oxygen plants in Europe.

It turned out their fortune was inherited from the Granny's late husband, who invented and patented some kind of oxygen valve and Granny did not hesitate to let Jim, or anyone else, know that was where the money came from.

Bud Reilly, on the other hand, had a construction company and 1,400 acres of almond trees.

The negotiations did not succeed, so they decided to return to the USA.

The airline for the return trip insisted that a nurse must accompany the Granny, but Granny would have none of it. This meant that another nurse, whom granny did not know, was employed and the usual nurse took another flight, as she had been promised, a free trip to the states.

Two years later we transferred to Cork and we lost contact with the Kanes and Rileys. Sometime in 1969 or 1970 I heard an Inspector from the Vocational Schools describe his trip to California and seeing 1,400 acres of almonds. I interrupted to ask was that on Bud Riley's estate and the speaker in amazement said "Yes", followed by "Do you know him?", I replied "I used to know him, but I have not seen him since 1962".

Chapter 7 – Key years in Dublin

Prof Ruane's trip

Early in 1962 Professor Ruane informed me that he was embarking on a study tour of New Zealand. New Zealand was and is the most efficient and lowest cost producer in the world of milk and milk products, particularly butter and cheddar cheese. It was also the biggest exporter and lowest cost producer of lamb. He would also be visiting some research centres in Australia and the USA on the way home, all of which would take nearly five months. He said "I am leaving you in charge of the farms (Albert College and Gormanstown) and the lectures that I give", with the exception of the cow diets which he left to a young man with a PHD in nutrition from an American university. It was a daunting responsibility and all the more daunting when there were others much older and more experienced than myself in his Department. I was in a temporary post with a very poor salary and a very ill wife, but I welcomed the challenge. As a junior member of staff, I was not entitled to attend Faculty Meetings.

Almost immediately after Professor Ruane departed three unusual things happened.

1. Professor Ruane's prize cow, yielding 6 gallons per day got sick. I called the Veterinary College. She was loaded into a trailer, but alas she died on the way. I had a letter from the Vet College – the cause of death was "impaction of the rumen, due to inadequate fibre in the diet". Following Professor Ruane's return to Ireland, the young man with the PhD in nutrition was sent packing back to the USA.

2. An exotic disease hit the cattle on the out-farm at Stormanstown and

3. Lyons Estate in West Dublin was put on the market.

Mucosal Disease

The Veterinary Faculty provided veterinary services for the Agriculture Faculty. Professors, lecturers and students were very academically interested in this disease, which they called mucosal disease or Texas Fever, which afflicted our animals. However, they were doing nothing to stop the spread of it and it was 100 per cent fatal for the animals infected. I was getting desperate about the situation. I phoned the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Pat Hartnett to meet him. "I will see you at the Irish Grassland meeting tomorrow, Saturday" he said and we met in the old Jury's Hotel in Dame Street. I told him what was happening. He looked at me with a look of horror and then with anger in his voice said "I will fix that". "Give me your home phone number and I will call you after 7pm". He there and then left the meeting.

The call came to my home in Clontarf at about 8pm, with a demand that I be at Stormanstown farmyard at 10am on Sunday morning. I got there on time, only to find a fleet of lorries awaiting to be let in. Lorries were admitted and the gates were closed. Mr. Hartnett and several others arrived. "We are slaughtering every animal in this yard he said". By 1pm the operation was complete, carcasses loaded into high sided trucks and away went the dead animals to be disposed of. "The College will be compensated for this he said and I want every animal in the adjacent fields to be sent to a meat plant within the next week. If news of this disease gets out it could seriously damage our beef industry, so I do not want to read about it in the papers".

The message was clear. "I will arrange for Frank Quinn of Irish meat packers to come to buy the animals in the fields", he said. He did that, and Frank Quinn arrived a few days later in the biggest Mercedes I had ever seen and, of course, his Chauffer. He looked at the cattle and just said, I will pay the going rate and I will have them collected on such a date. I found him to be a decent man to deal with.

Some of these animals were part of an experiment run by a senior colleague and he refused to release them. This forced me to go to Mr. Joe McHale Secretary in UCD and after checking the facts with Mr. Hartnett, he sent a very blunt written instruction to my colleague that he was to carry out my instructions. Naturally, I was again in the bad books. Needless to say the Veterinary faculty were not too happy with me either.

The Department of Agriculture paid for the slaughtered animals and Frank Quinn paid for the live animals, so the final loss was confined to the 10 or 12 that died. The issue never hit the news headlines for which UCD and the Department of Agriculture were very grateful. Phone calls about the matter from two English tabloids were made to my home, wherever they got my number, but they were fobbed off successfully. It was a very distressing time for my wife and myself. Fortunately, the farm forman, Pat Boland, also "rang dum" on the whole issue.

Lyons Sale

In the midst of this entire crisis, I got a call from the late Dr. Henry Kennedy, Secretary of IAOS (now ICOS) Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society. "Come in, I want to talk to you" he said.

I drove in the next day to his office in Merrion Square. "Did you see this?" he asked putting a big newspaper ad, on the table, for the sale of Lyons Estate. "That's what you need for the Faculty and don't let it go", he admonished me. I thanked him, and left and went to the estate agents Jackson Stops and McCabe, where I got very little information, other than the phone number to contact at Lyons. Clearly, I did not look like a credible purchaser. Having thought about the matter, I called the President's secretary, Ms. Joyce Padbury, asking for an appointment with the President which, surprisingly I readily got. Apart from shaking my hand at conferrings, I had never met the man, but I knew he had a reputation for being very stern and blunt with people.

When I was brought into his office he just said, "Well?" "President", I said "the Albert College farm is no longer suitable for our Faculty needs". "I know that", he said gruffly. "There is an estate for sale 14 miles from here" I said, giving him the ad, "and it looks as if it would be very suitable".

"Go out young man and examine it", he said "and bring me back a report within two weeks, and keep your mouth shut, not a word to anyone". I left in a quandary. How could I not let me colleagues know and how could I get opinions from more experienced people, if I kept "my mouth shut".

I contacted the Agent in Lyons, a Captain Robinson, and straight away, of course, he wanted to know who was interested in the purchase. I had some difficulty in getting access, without telling him who was the interested party. However, I got over that and I examined the estate from end to end. Meantime, I was communicating by letter to Professor Ruane – phone communication in those days was not what it is now. At first he asked if I could have the auction postponed, which was impossible. His letters (copies retained) varied from "are you sure you are doing the right thing" to "I have every confidence in your judgement etc". It must have been a harrowing time for him, 14000 miles away. He did however give me advice on who to contact in the Department of Agriculture as the Department would be expected to foot the bill. He nominated Mr. Dan Hoctor, Assistant Secretary and Mr. John Beatty, Chief livestock inspector. Now that I had instructions to get other opinions, I phoned the President for permission to consult with the Department, and he readily agreed.

Mr. Hoctor and Mr. Beatty agreed to meet me in Lyons on a Saturday. I drove them all through the estate, but I detected very little enthusiasm from them about the whole idea. It was what they did not say, rather than what they said, that worried me.

The following week I accidentally met John

Beatty at the bull show, in Ballsbridge. He was in great form, after a few drinks. He outlined his reservations about Lyons and I, as a very young graduate, was not going to argue with an experienced man in his sixties, particularly as I did not want to antagonise him.

Back in my office in Glasnevin, I wrote down all his reservations. After reflecting on the matter for 24 hours, I wrote down the counter arguments. Having done that, I phoned for an appointment with President Tierney. I explained what happened during the visit to Lyons by Mr. Hoctor and Mr. Beatty and that I met Mr. Beatty at the Bull Show. I gave him my record of the reservations and my counter arguments. He studied the script briefly and then said "they are coming to see me next Wednesday; I want you to be present".

I became aware that Dr. Kennedy was a close friend of the President, Dr. Tierney and that his son Professor Maurice Kennedy was a member of the Governing Body of UCD. For that reason, I invited Dr. Kennedy to visit Lyons and he agreed. He was a very big and feeble man, but he was enthusiastic about visiting Lyons.

I drove him in my little VW Beetle car to Lyons and all around the estate on the Saturday before the meeting with Hoctor and Beatty. We also had a look through the House, after which I said "What do you think Dr. Kennedy?" To which he replied "take me to the Spa" which was a hotel in Lucan. In the Spa he asked for a large Paddy. He just sat there, sipping the whiskey. Again I asked for his opinion, and again he said "get me another Paddy". Not a word did he utter. Again I said "what do you think Dr.?" To which he replied "Jaysus, t'was a great empire in its day. Take me home".

I could only conclude that he was reminiscing about Landlordism, in his youth, but he did advise Dr. Tierney not to let it go, I heard afterwards.

At the appointed time on Wednesday, I was admitted to his office. The President was accompanied by the Registrar, Professor Hogan and the Secretary/Bursar; Mr. Joe McHale was just leaving. Mr. Hoctor and Mr. Beatty arrived. Coffee and biscuits were delivered and small talk pursued. Suddenly, Mr. Beatty turned to talk about Lyons, outlining his reservations as he had done at the bull show. The President rising slowly from his chair, pipe in hand, said "that's a very valid point" and going over to the fire with a rolled up piece of newspaper which he used to light the pipe (it was the time of the match strike) and with the pipe lighting successfully, he replied "but then again, you could think of it another way" quoting word for word exactly from the text I had given him.

Mr. Beatty then came in with another reservation I had heard at the show. This time he praised Mr. Hoctor for his observation, remarking that he would never have thought of that himself. He puffed on the pipe as he stood gazing out the window and turned to deliver slowly and with conviction the answer I had given him. It was as good a piece of acting as I had ever witnessed. The talk ended quickly. Only the President and the two visitors spoke. I returned to my office in Glasnevin, not sure of the outcome of this brief meeting. I had just got to my desk, when the phone rang – the President wants to speak to you. I waited nervously. He came on just saying "thank you young man, your notes won the day", before I could reply, the phone was put down.

Mr. Beatty and Mr. Hoctor had communicated their reservations to Professor Ruane as can be seen from Professor Ruane's letters. Following their meeting with President Tierney, their reservations vanished, as can be seen from later letters from Professor Ruane. It seemed to me that they were reluctant to make a decision and were happy enough to go along with the President's decision to purchase the estate.

Land Commission

The local agricultural advisor in the Lyons area contacted me to say the Land Commission was under pressure from politicians to divide up Lyons Estate for small farmers. I made an appointment to meet the relevant person in the Commission, at head office in Merrion Square. I made a very strong case about the necessity to get a good farm for the faculty of Agriculture. I need not have worried. To me, he appeared to be greatly relieved to have a valid excuse to avoid the difficult talk of splitting the 1320 acres into 50 acre units.

Frank Quinn

Coming nearer the sale Mr. Frank Quinn called to see me at Albert College. He had heard I was out examining Lyons and wanted to know if UCD was serious about its purchase. I said yes, and I could see the shock in his face. "I am very interested he said". It would suit our business very well and I have had my eye on it for sometime". This came as a shock to me. I explained to him the reasons why we would have to move from the Albert, pointing out all the estates right up to our boundary fence. I made a great issue of the importance of having good teaching facilities and research facilities for our young graduates. He was very polite and said he understood, but was clearly disappointed and left wishing me well in my endeavours to acquire Lyons. I am convinced that Frank Quinn would have made a serious attempt to buy Lyons, had I not got to know him through Mr Pat Hartnett and our cattle disease problem.

The Auction and After

I had a call from the President a few days before 10 April. He instructed me to go to the auction, to make sure to be seen there but added "keep your hands in your pockets". "I will have my man there to do the bidding; you will just be a decoy". I agreed, of course, being greatly relieved not to have the responsibility of bidding.

On the morning of the sale, I had a phone call from Frank Quinn who asked "is UCD determined to buy today", I said we were because we had no other choice, but I will not be the person doing the bidding. There was a long pause before he replied "in that case I will not make it more expensive for you".

On arriving at the auction in Lyons, the first person I saw was Frank Quinn. It worried me, but he was true to his word, and he did not bid. There were just two bids. A bid of £95,000 was made by a Major Profumo, believed to be a brother of a disgraced Cabinet Minister in London. Quick as a flash Professor Pierce Purcell of UCD Governing Body bid £100,000 and it was all over. Professor Purcell was seated in a high back chair in the front row so people did not know where the bid came from or who the buyer was.

I returned to my office in Glasnevin where the senior academics were blissfully unaware of what happened. Most of them heard it on the 6pm news.

Shortly after I got to the office the President's Office phoned. The President came on just to say "thank you young man for your help" and put down the phone.

I never met the man or never spoke to him again, but he did however, give me a very good reference when I applied for the Professorship in UCC and I believe he supported me at the meeting of the NUI in July 1964, when I was appointed.

Shortly after the purchase, the Dean of the Faculty, Professor John Carroll a very kindly man in his sixties called to my office. He told me he had asked the President if he could go to see Lyons Estate and the President told him to come and ask me. I was embarrassed and angry. How could the President humiliate a very kind and decent man by telling him to get permission from me, who was one of his students just 6 years previously? I apologised profusely and offered to drive him there myself. He very politely declined, thanked me and left quietly.

Some weeks later I had further evidence of the lack of communication within UCD. I was in Lyons House when the Professor of Geology in UCD called to the front door. I answered the door and of course he had no idea who I was. "I am here to get the usual permission for my students to come on a field trip to Lyons. "Is Captain Robinson about?" "He is not" I replied. "Lyons Estate is now the property of UCD and of course you can have permission for your field trip." "Nobody told me" he said with a profound look of disbelief.

He was using Lyons because it is one of the very few places in Leinster which had outcrop of old red sandstone. It also had soils varying in ph from 5 to 8.0., and two kinds of limestone.

Professor Ruane arrived home in May and very quickly, of course, made arrangements to inspect the new property. We drove all over the estate, with little or no comment from him. Finally, as we finished the inspection he just said "I am glad that there was somebody with the courage to buy this estate while I was away". He never discussed the purchase with me again. His focus was entirely on planning for the future.

Personally, I felt increasingly unhappy in the Faculty and was very glad to join the Faculty of Dairy Science in Cork two years later.

The Albert College subsequently became the home of Dublin City University, which was a very good decision. The farm at Stormanstown was used for the new Ballymun high rise apartments – poor quality buildings, with no amenities. This turned out to be a social failure, with drug addiction and crime etc. Years later, the apartments were demolished and better housing and necessary amenities put in their place.

Shortly, after the purchase of Lyons, I was driving the front avenue where I saw roughly thirty horses and riders. I jumped

out of my car and called to them, asking who gave them permission to ride over this land. A very posh accept replied "I say young man, we have been riding over this land since before you were born" "That may be so, but the new owners will not permit such a practise" I replied. He turned his horse and galloped off. One of the old farm workers saw and heard what happened, saying "yourself and Dr. Tierney are just commoners with good jobs; you are not belong to the gentry."

Two weeks later as I was going home through New Castle Village, which was located very near Lyons, the hunting group were there. One of them beckoned to me to come to talk to him. I stayed in the car with the window open. He had to dismount to talk to me. He wished that I would meet with the Hunt Master to discuss the use of Lyons for exercising their horses. I replied that Lyons would now be a research and teaching unit and there was no question of ever having the use of it for exercising their horses. He mounted his horse, gave the spurs to the animals and galloped off to join his friends. That was the end of that.

Our New Arrival

Having been married since 1958, Bred- he was getting anxious about the lack of pregnancy. Eventually, in 1962 the GP recommended that she should visit Dr. DeValera, a gynaecologist, which she did and a pregnancy was confirmed in September 1963. We celebrated with a dinner in the Carmel Hotel, off Dame Street. The following spring, she began to feel very unwell. Her mother came up from Kilkenny to help. A couple of days later, when I was out at a lecture in Jurys Hotel in Dame Street, she got very ill. I could not be contacted, so her mother phoned Dr. DeValera at approximately 9pm and he called to our house in Vernon Avenue. Seeing her condition, he took her in his own car to the Mater Hospi-

Mary was born in 1964 in Dublin

tal. She mentioned that she forgot to bring her rosary beads, whereupon he gave her a rosary bead, which he said was blessed by Pope John the XX111 and put her into the care of the hospital staff.

I never met Dr. DeValera, but I shall always be grateful to him for his quick action, without which the baby would almost certainly have been lost. Later on, she was transferred to Mount Carmel nursing home. In Mount Carmel, she gave premature birth to a baby girl. As the chances of survival were slim the child was baptised immediately. I got a call from Mount Carmel at about 6am and I went there immediately. The sight of this tiny baby in the incubator shocked me. As I remember it, the child was less than 3 lbs in weight, and was being fed by a drip.

Bredhe looked very ill and agitated. She was convinced the child would not survive and the hospital staff were not very reassuring. However she did survive, though she was very delicate for many years. Approximately three months later she was formally baptised in the Church in Clontarf, just a few months before our move to Cork. She is now a beautiful woman, approximately 4 inches taller than myself, with her own family – a 24 year old daughter and 20 year old son (as of 2013) and living in the USA since she married.

Chapter 8 – The move to Cork

Problems at Work

Following the purchase of Lyons, I felt increasingly isolated in the Faculty. The levels of work and the extra travelling to Lyons as opposed to the Albert College, also put extra pressure on me, at a time when Bredhe was unwell.

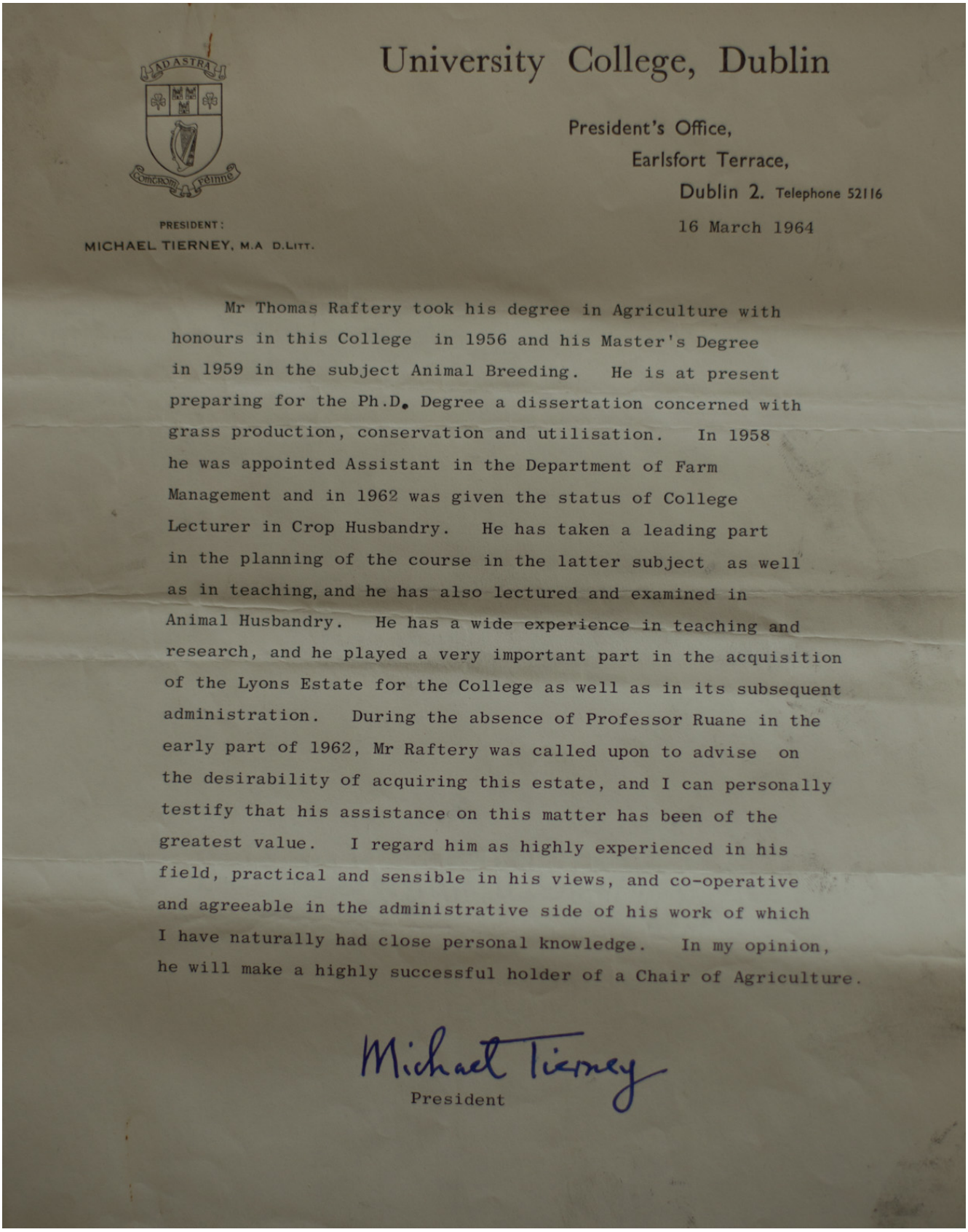
Differences also arose between professor Ruane and myself (two stubborn men) and of course, he was the boss. Given this situation, I decided to move on, into the commercial world. I got an attractive (in money terms) offer, but before deciding I sought advice from the Director of Warrenstown Agricultural College, Rev. Fr. Collins, in County Meath. Fr. Collins was a Kerry man whose mother died when they were very young. His father, he told me, did everything from mending their shoes and clothes to cutting their hair and of course running the small farm. He had a brother a Bishop in Brazil. Having listened to my story, he said I know what you are going through, but my advice he said is "to bide your time, something more appropriate will turn up". He seemed so confident and calm that I decided to soldier on and sure enough roughly six months later, Professor Boyle, who was the Professor of Agriculture in UCC retired and the post was advertised.

Fr. Collins contacted me and advised me to apply for it, despite my age of just 30 years. I spoke with Bredhe and she encouraged me to take Fr. Collins advice, a man who greatly impressed her with his work with students and his common sense. I raised the matter with Professor Ruane and to my great surprise and relief, he encouraged me to go for it. However, he added, "I cannot help you there. Any intervention on my part would be likely to do more harm than good, but I will give you a good reference".

Apparently he had some run in with the Authorities in UCC about students from UCC who came to Dublin to complete their 3rd and 4th year courses for the B.Agr.Sc. Degree in the same was students from Galway did after two years basic sciences in Galway. So I decided to apply for the post. In my application I had references from prominent people from both inside and outside of the College. Included were Rev. Fr. Collins, Professor J.B. Ruane, Dr. Henry Kennedy of IAOS, Mr. Stan Brophy, an outstanding farmer from Tullow, Co. Carlow. Stan's brother Brendan, a business man, served a few terms on the Governing Body of UCD and would therefore have got to know many of the academics, who would have votes in the appointment of Professors and lecturers in the National University Colleges. Finally I wrote to President Tierney for a reference. His reference letter (see overleaf), was in large part responsible for my being appointed, as far as I can tell.

Canvassing for the Professorship

I was advised to visit UCC and to see as many of the academics and Members of the Governing Body of the College as possible. My first visit to UCC was less than encouraging. I decided to go to the various Departments in alphabetical order, starting with Anatomy where I met Professor McConnell, Head of the anatomy Department. I got no chance to make my case, but I got a very detailed lecture on the anatomy of the pig and how closely it resembles the human, particularly the digestive tract. Professor Sheehy, of the faculty of Agriculture in UCD, had taught us that nearly ten years earlier. Finally I made some excuse and escaped, as I left he stood to attention giving me the military salute. I wondered was he crazy? Next on the list was Biochemistry, where I met Professor Tom Brady, Head of the Department. Still reeling from the first encounter, Tom offered me a cup of coffee and we had a very relaxed chat. He told me he had been very interested, at one time, in the complicated digestive system of the growing calf. I had too, and we had a very rational, useful and friendly exchange of views.



University College, Dublin

President's Office,
Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2. Telephone 52116

16 March 1964

PRESIDENT:
MICHAEL TIERNEY, M.A D.LITT.

Mr Thomas Raftery took his degree in Agriculture with honours in this College in 1956 and his Master's Degree in 1959 in the subject Animal Breeding. He is at present preparing for the Ph.D. Degree a dissertation concerned with grass production, conservation and utilisation. In 1958 he was appointed Assistant in the Department of Farm Management and in 1962 was given the status of College Lecturer in Crop Husbandry. He has taken a leading part in the planning of the course in the latter subject as well as in teaching, and he has also lectured and examined in Animal Husbandry. He has a wide experience in teaching and research, and he played a very important part in the acquisition of the Lyons Estate for the College as well as in its subsequent administration. During the absence of Professor Ruane in the early part of 1962, Mr Raftery was called upon to advise on the desirability of acquiring this estate, and I can personally testify that his assistance on this matter has been of the greatest value. I regard him as highly experienced in his field, practical and sensible in his views, and co-operative and agreeable in the administrative side of his work of which I have naturally had close personal knowledge. In my opinion, he will make a highly successful holder of a Chair of Agriculture.

Michael Tierney
President

Reference letter from UCD president Michael Tierney

Next, I went to the Dairy Science Faculty on Donovan's Road. The Faculty consisted of a number of Departments e.g. Agriculture (Dairy Husbandry), Dairy Economics, Dairy Technology, Dairy Chemistry, Dairy Microbiology etc. As it was Easter Holiday week there were very few around. I did meet a man who was drunk and he asked me to help him up to his office. I did so and it was the office of the Professor of Dairy Technology. In so far as he was able to speak, he spoke in Irish and then fell asleep.

I got into my car and returned to Dublin rather downcast by the experience. Meeting professor Ruane, he enquired how I got on. I replied saying UCC is like a mad house telling him what happened in UCC. "Hold on now", he said "we have people like that ain UCD too. You were just unlucky, and my advice to you is to try again". That lifted my spirits somewhat and I did go back again and again where I met some very gifted and welcoming people, such as Professor Michael Murphy who was Professor of Dairy and Food Economics and Professor Pyne, who was Professor of Dairy Chemistry. I also met the Registrar, Professor Carey. He was only interested in how I did in Mathematics in the Leaving Cert. I told him I got honours. "Good" he said and that was it.

It just goes to show how wrong first impressions can be. I also visited some of the non-academic Governors from Cork City and County and County Kerry. Professor Ruane was very accommodating in giving me time off, and I was very grateful for that.

Academic Appointments

Academic appointments in the sixties were not as rigorous as in the present era. You submitted your CV and lobbied those who would be voting. Voting would start at the Faculty level, then at the Academic Council followed by the Governing Body. The final vote was with the Senate of the National University of Ireland, having got all the votes from the Constituent Colleges.

There were at least six names forwarded for the Professorship of Agriculture in Cork, sent to the Senate of the NUI – Dr. Gannon Director of the Agriculture College at Dararra, Clonakilty, Mr. Sean O'Donovan, who was already working under Professor Boyle, the retiring Professor in UCC, myself, and three others whose names I did not get.

Naturally, it was assumed that the two Cork men who were also considerably older than me had the better chance of being appointed. On the day however, I was chosen by a very significant margin – in acing parlance, I won pulling up. In trying to reason what happened, I remembered President Tierney's last sentence in his reference "He will make a good Professor of Agriculture". As President of the largest College in the NUI, President Tierney could count on getting considerable support for the candidate of his choice. Of course, I can never be sure, but I surmised that it was payback time for the handling of the purchase of Lyons and Mucosal Disease crisis. I did as he demanded, "I kept my mouth shut". It was President Tierney's last time at the Senate of the NUI, as he had reached the age of retirement.

Shortly after getting the good news of my appointment, the door bell rang. I opened the door and there with a smile from ear to ear was Professor Ruane, offering his congratulations. He was genuinely pleased and on leaving advised "don't lose the run of yourself now" and took off in his car.

Phone calls, telegrams and letters of congratulations began to arrive over the next few days. It was the month of July and I would be taking up my new post at the beginning of the new term, the first week of October.

Munster and Leinster Bank were quick off the mark, with a congratulatory letter from their Branch in South Mall Cork and an offer of a house to lease in Browningstown Park, near the village of Douglas. We took a short holiday in Cork and viewed the house, which was a semi-detached with a strange name of Manziekert and agreed with the Bank Manager, Tom Casey, to take up residence in late September.

Moving to Cork

Having secured the use of a residence in Cork, we had to sell the home we loved and leave the area and neighbours we loved. The house was purchased by a Solicitor in Naas for the sum of £5,600, just twice the price we paid for it, three years

earlier in Morrissey's Auction rooms – the day I had to get the loan of £100 from Professor Ruane to put a deposit on it.

I made a number of trips to Cork bringing the various contents, which were worth bringing before our final departure. The neighbours to the left side Mr. And Mrs. Green had become very attached to our little baby and I remember Mrs. Green crying as she kissed the child goodbye. They had grandchildren in Africa which they very rarely saw. We remained in contact with them and visited them many times in Dublin over the following years. They joy on seeing our little girl was amazing. It was very obvious that they greatly missed their own grandchildren.

On arrival to "Manziekert", neighbours came offering help which was very welcome. Just as we had settled in and sitting down for a cup of tea the door bell rang. I opened the door and outside was this middle-aged man with a notebook in hand and the pencil in his ear. "You will be wanting milk in the morning and de paper?" "Yes" I said and thanked him

I returned to the table saying, how did he know we were here? To which Bredhe, who had lived in Cork for a couple of years replied "you are in Cork now, this is not like Dublin".

Before taking up duty, I made a trip to the West, to see the family, particularly my mother. Padraic travelled with me into Athenry on some business or other. As we passed my old schoolmaster's home, we spotted Master O'Regan. I stopped the car and got out to say hello to him. He looked very unwell. As I was speaking to him he began to weep. Padraic came and greeted him but he was unable to reply. We said on goodbyes and departed. When we got into the car Padraic said "I forgot to tell you he is very ill". That was a relief; at least it was not the sight of me again, which brought tears to his eyes. He must have wondered how the boy (myself) who was a reluctant student, had become a University Professor, 16 years after he last saw me in school. In truth, I wondered about that too.

Professor Ruane

Following my move to Cork, I had very little contact with Professor Ruane. We would meet occasionally at functions and he always looked well, even if a little overweight. Consequently, I was shocked when in 1975 I got a call from my former colleague Professor Gallagher, to tell me that Professor Ruane had suffered a stroke and was hospitalised in St. Vincent's in Dublin. I travelled to Dublin to visit him. Physically, he did not look very sick, but alas, he was unable to talk. He was anxious to tell me something, but was unable to communicate. In frustration he hit the bedside table, sending everything on the table scattering. A nurse approached and quietly indicated I should leave, which I did. It was not a pleasant experience, to see such a strong willed, big man, who was so full of life, incapable of saying a few words to me.

When he left hospital, I went to see him in his house in Lyons Estate. This time, he was able to say a few words and he was able to eat a light lunch. Bredhe was with me and his wife Lynda was, as usual, very calm and hospitable. We did not dwell very long as I could see he was getting tired, but he was, in my humble view, much better than when I had seen him in hospital. Consequently, I was shocked when his son Dermot phoned me on September 19th 1976 to let me know that he had died. I went to the funeral mass in Lucan, where I met the whole family. It was difficult to accept that the man, who had such a positive influence on my career, was gone, at such an early age.

His son Dermot became a professor in the Agriculture Faculty. In his year, as President of the Agricultural Science Society, I was presented with the "Distinguished Members Award", for services to Agriculture. The Dean of the Faculty, Professor Boland, spoke about my contribution to the Industry and Dermot as President of

the Association presented the award, a beautiful piece of modern sculpture, in September 2007, just eight months after Bredhe died. How she would have loved to be there. I continued to stay in touch, by phone, with Dermot, a man who was, in my view, more like his mother than his father, both physically and mentally. We still phone each other, on various issues, usually agricultural and family matters.

Getting Ready for UCC

Bredhe said you must get new clothes before going to UCC as your present clothes look terrible after all the shifting of goods from Dublin to Cork. Also we need a cot for the child.

She knew where to shop in Cork. We went into Roches Stores first where we bought the cot. They agreed to deliver the cot to our house. Then we went to the menswear and I was carrying the child in some kind of basket. She was unhappy with what she saw in the menswear and went next door, where she selected appropriate clothes for starting in the new job. Some amendments had to be made; I would collect the clothes two days later. When I went in to collect the clothes I wrote a cheque for Roches Stores. The man behind the counter said, "you are not in Roches Stores, you are in Cash's" "sorry" I said "give me back the cheque and I will write you another "Yerra don't bother boy, I will take it next door and they will sign it" Yes, now I knew I was in a very different culture than I been accustomed to in Dublin, and I liked this new culture.

Out I go on the street, with my purchase, feeling very pleased with myself, where I saw a former student Dennis Buckley. I was having a great a chat with him when he began to laugh saying "this happens regularly. I'm not Dennis, I am his twin brother. Very nice to have met you Tom" and off he goes.

Truly, I thought this is more a village than a city, where everybody seemed to know everybody. A few days later I had further

evidence of this culture. I got a piece of electrical equipment in Fitzgerald's on the Grand Parade. The equipment was faulty, so I went back and complained to the man who gave it to me. As I was explaining the issue a supervisor came along saying "have you a problem Professor?" Turning to the assistant he said, "look after this man, he is new in town."

I went home to relate my experiences to Bredhe, who said "I told you how different Cork is to Dublin".

Starting in UCC

I was allocated my predecessor's office in the Dairy Science Building and I was putting the key in the door a man shouted, "where do you think you are going?" I turned to him and he immediately apologised saying "sorry Professor, I thought you were a student", - nice compliment. I invited him into the room and had a chat with him. His name was John Power and he was the caretaker in the building. He told me the theatre was his hobby and that he wrote plays – a doorman writing plays, I

thought to myself this is scarcely credible – My play "As some Tall Cliff" is playing in the Everyman Theatre, he said, I will give you two tickets if you would like to go". Naturally I did not decline the offer and we went to the play where there was a full house and we enjoyed it, but some of the Cork wit did not register with me, but it did with Bredhe, who knew more about Cork than I did.

John was delighted when I congratulated him next morning and we regularly exchanged jokes and John frequently suggested one man plays and films that I would like such as James N. Healy and Charles Lynch shows.

Charles Lynch was a renowned pianist in those days and he and James N. Healy did one-man acts. I remember James telling stories of old shows. He related a story of a famous Italian tenor, where the audience were calling for encore after encore until the exhausted tenor enquired "how many more times do I have to sing it?" a voice in the Gods (back seats) replied "until you get it right boy".

He recollected another time when the opera The Gondoliers, I think, was playing. A gondola was wheeled across at the back of the stage. From the gondola a man jumped out of each night, as if into the water and the fall was broken by a mattress. One night the mattress was missing and the man hit the floor with a bang. From the Gods came a shout "Christ tis frozen tonight".

My New Colleagues in the Faculty

Professor Murphy, a Kerry man and a former Kerry footballer was in the office across the corridor. He was known as the "bomber", for some reason – certainly he had nothing to do with bombs. My native country was the dominant force in Gaelic football in the sixties. They played in five all-Ireland finals, winning three in a row. Following each major football game Professor Murphy and I discussed the games on the Monday, during coffee breaks. The Secretary Miss Hartnett would make the coffee and she always had a supply of biscuits.

Miss Hartnett was not very far off retirement age. When I started she apologised that she was unable to take short hand writing, so I assured her that was no problem and I apologised for my bad hand writing. She was very kind and very religious woman, always praying for someone or some cause.

Professor McGrath was next in the corridor. He was Professor of Dairy Engineering. The Dairy Science Faculty had its own separate library and the Librarian also acted as secretary for academic staff. Professor McGrath retired shortly after I arrived and was replaced by the lecturer in his Department, Chris Sinnott. At the end of the corridor was the best lecture theatre in UCC at that time.

On the next floor were Professor Pyne, a renowned Dairy Chemist and Professor O'Shea who was a professor of Dairy Technology. Alas he had developed an addiction to alcohol. In his younger days he wrote plays in both Irish and English, which were broadcast on Radio Eireann, I was told. The "demon drink" destroyed him and his family.

Professor Tadgh O'Mullane was the Professor of Dairy Microbiology, a lovely man. Professor O'Shea was replaced by John Foley. During John's term as Professor of Dairy Technology, he was approached by the manufacturers of Baileys Cream Liquor. The problem with this drink, in the early days, was that the whiskey and cream separated, if left for sometime in the bottle. They wanted a solution for this problem. John agreed to put a post-graduate student he had – a very bring young fellow from Bishopstown to work on the problem. He was a Murphy whose father was from Kilkenny and a Veterinary Surgeon, in Cork.

For this, they gave a few thousand pounds and Murphy cracked the problem and got

his M.Sc. degree. It must be the best investment the Company ever made. Baileys Cream is now known worldwide. They sell 70 million bottles per year and recently they celebrated their seventy billionth bottle sold.

I regularly annoyed Professor Foley by reminding him that he could have made the College rich if he only demanded a few pennies per bottle sold, from the manufacturers. John retired to his home farm near Limerick city and went into horse breeding. Murphy emigrated to England becoming head of Granada Television for a time and head of one of the largest trucking companies in Britain for some time also. I have no idea where he is now, but no doubt, he is in some good job.

The Key People in UCC

I reckoned that the three most important people in College, for me, were the President, Professor McHenry, the Secretary/ Bursar who was Jim Hurley and Sean O'Donovan, with whom I would have to work very closely. I got an appointment with the President. He was slim and handsome man, with a good crop of grey hair and a rather austere or shy manner. He had been the Professor of Physics previously. The meeting was brief – very brief. A handshake, a welcome and my signature on some kind of document and that was it. I got a feeling that I was not his preferred candidate for the chair.

Next stop was the Secretary's Office, Mr. Jim Hurley. He was a very big man and I knew that he had been a great hurler on the Cork team, many years ago. "I had expected you would be a bigger man" he said, "So did my mother" I said. "I see we have a smart aleck here" he replied. It was the first and last time I ever saw the man and it was very clear to me that Sean O'Donovan, who was from West Cork, as he was, would have been his preferred choice too. Shortly afterwards, I heard he was gravely ill with cancer, and he died very quickly. I got to know some of his family, subsequently and they were very nice, decent people.

Sean O'Donovan

I proceeded to the College Farm in Bishopstown to meet Sean. To my surprise and delight I got the warmest of welcomes. Sean showed me around and it was very clear that he was running a good show. All the animals were in good condition, particularly the cows. Tractors, trailers, milking equipment etc., were very clearly well maintained and the farmyard clean and tidy from his conversation I knew that Sean was a good manager. All the buildings were old fashioned, but in very well shape.

He took me into the farm office to go through some of the records. I noted he smoked a lot – fingers were very stained. He had the desk of the office located by the window, which gave him a full view of anybody coming or going through the entrance gate. I looked out and saw a wreck of an old tractor, with no bonnet and belching smoke, pulling an equally bad trailer, coming through the gate. My God I said to Sean "who is that knacker coming in?" He looked out, took the cigarette from his lips, smiled and just said that's my brother Bernie. Before I could make a bigger fool of myself, Bernie was in the office – a big heavy man with a lovely smile. He gave me a sincere welcome to Cork and was off again after some message to Sean. I was lost for words and we just carried on checking the records, which were neat and in lovely handwriting.

Just how two brothers could be so different amazed me. Every time I drove to Bandon afterwards I saw Bernie's farm, a fine piece of land, a fine farm house, and the most chaotic farmyard you could imagine.

Sean worked with me from 1964 to 1990 when he retired, taking early retirement, due to failing health, brought about by the excessive nicotine. He was the best colleague I could ever wish to have. Truly I was a very lucky man to have such a loyal and competent man to work with. He died

in Jan 1996 and I had a plaque erected in his honour in Fota, where he did such great work.

Changes on the Farm

The herd of cows were all Friesians, Good quality animals. They were in an old house, individually stalled and the milking machine was the old fashioned bucket plant.

The milk was cooled with tap water in the dairy and the milk was collected daily by a bottling plant, which pasteurised and bottled the milk to be distributed to the homes in Cork City. A small quantity of the milk was cooled and bottled on the farm and delivered to a few very select homes in Cork, including the President of UCC and the former Professor of Agriculture. It was a time wasting, elitist and expensive exercise, and possibly a health risk.

"That must cease Sean" I said. "There will be trouble if you do that" said Sean, adding that "it should have ceased years ago". I gave two weeks' notice to customers and as predicted by Sean, there were protests. The President called me to his office demanding an explanation. I explained to him that it was not only uneconomic; it was a risk for consumers. I explained that Brucellosis was rampant in Ireland and that milk should be pasteurised to eliminate the risk to consumers. He never heard of Brucellosis, which causes abortion in cows and in humans it causes a very serious illness called undulant fever, which is an, incurable condition. This was all news to him, so I advised him to ask the Veterinary Officer in the City Hall, or check with any hospital. In any case I said, it will soon be illegal to sell un-pasteurised milk. There were a number of other complaints from former customers, but they all got the same answer and I presume, if they checked with the City Hall, they got the same reply. So what was sarcastically referred to, by Cork wits, as the most educated milk in Cork, ceased. Sean was delighted. Now he could concentrate on producing milk and forget about the risks and trouble of bottling and distribution.

The housing of cows too was changed from the traditional tied up, to free range, with cubicles, silage feed in place of hay and a new milking parlour, which incorporated a balcony where visitors and students could view the milking operation. Paddy McElligot, a big merchant in Kerry and a sometime Governor of UCC, donated Wesphalia milking equipment for which he was an agent in Ireland. The staff, as well as Sean, were very pleased, because it made their work much easier, physically.

Promotion for Sean

In those days farmers usually delivered the milk to the local creameries where the cream was separated off and the skim milk returned to farms and fed to pigs and calves. Apart from the time wasting, going with the milk, they were bringing home the most valuable nutrient for humans and feeding it to livestock. In truth, the milk quality was so low, that creameries could do little else other than make butter.

To rectify this, farmers had to be advised on how to produce clean milk. The obvious people to help them and force them to raise standards were the Creamery Managers and Agricultural Advisors. I wrote to Creamery Managers to come to see how simple and low cost methods could solve this problem. We had what was known as open days for Creamery Managers and staff, where Sean excelled in demonstrating low cost simple methods for sterilising equipment and cooling the milk. It worked and soon farmers were penalised or had their milk rejected, if the bacterial count was above a certain level.

In addition to that Sean had a post graduate student to supervise, Dennis Brosnan, yes that's the man who subsequently built up the Kerry Group. Dennis was surveying the detergent sterilizers which were on the market for dairying equipment. He travelled Munster buying detergent sterilizers, at random, in creameries and hardware stores. Much of it was passed its sell

by date and some of it was useless. These out-of-date products were shipped in from Britain at bargain prices and sold to unsuspecting producers at full price in Ireland.

Naturally the Department of Agriculture began to clamp down on these "cowboys" when Brosnan's results got out. With all this evidence of Sean's work, I made a case to get a Statutory Lectureship for him. The President readily agreed, but he said the Lectureship will have to be publicly advertised in the media and the Senate of the NUI will be the final arbiters.

The position was advertised, in the usual way. Shortly afterwards I had a visit from Dr. Donal McCarthy, Director of the Central Statistics Office in Dublin. Previously he had been Professor of Statistics in UCC. He was making a case for his son Brian, who qualified as a B.Agr.Sc., in the late fifties and had returned from the USA with a Ph.D in animal nutrition. Yes, I remember Brian, I said, as a student and a colleague, when he returned from the USA to teach animal nutrition in UCD. I pointed out that his expertise was very narrow and not very relevant to the work we were doing, which was true. He said he understood, but he was less than happy with my reply. Brian, at this time had returned to the USA, after a dispute with Professor Ruane, following the death of Professor Ruane's best cow, so I heard no more from Brian or his father, on that subject. Sean was appointed a Statutory Lecturer by the Senate and he was delighted with that.

More Land

Sometime in early 1965, President McHenry called Dr. Paddy Fitzgerald, of the Medical Faculty and myself to his office. He explained that the Mardyke Sports Area was entirely inadequate for the expanding number of students. As Manager of the College GAA teams Dr. Fitzgerald was only too well aware of that a problem. He requested us to search for a suitable piece of land for extra sports pitches. We readily agreed. Cork City and environs, as most people know, has very little flat land, it's very hilly.

We worked our way through maps and eventually the only, relatively suitable site was owned by the African Missions Order in Wilton. We approached the Order but were flatly turned down. They wanted to maintain peace and quiet for prayers and meditation. As two obedient Catholics we fully understood and went away disappointed.

Looking through advertisements in the Examiner for land, I noticed that a farm of 75 acres was on the market in Ballincollig. The College already had an out farm of about 70 acres straight across the road from this 75 acre farm. Sean and I went to see it. There was an old but solid farm house, empty, and a few miserable farm buildings. The land was good, but too far from the College for sports fields. I contacted Dr. Fitzgerald and he agreed it was too far for students to travel, with virtually no public transport. We met the President, told him of our findings and he was very disappointed.

"President", I said, "If the College would buy the 75 acres in Ballincollig, I would be prepared to release sufficient land from the farm in Bishopstown for pitches. "My God, said Dr. Fitzgerald, that's the solution". The President was very relieved, but "I will have to discuss it with Mr. O'Mahony, Chairman of the Finance Committee" he said.

Things moved rapidly and the 75 acres were acquired for a little over £16,000, but with legal costs etc. It came to approximately £17,000. This gave Sean and myself a whole new opportunity to start a dairy farm from scratch.

Shelter for the cows was provided by covering a timber frame structure with corrugated galvanised steel sheeting. Internally there was a concrete floor in the centre – just wide enough to accommodate a tractor to sweep the concrete clear of faeces etc. On each side of the concrete strip were

spaces (cubicles) created by cheap timber strips and bedding in these cubicles was a mix of sand and turf mould. Ventilation was through an open strip on the peak of the building. It was designed to demonstrate to farmers that accommodation for cows need not be expensive.

Silage was contained between two 7ft high concrete walls with no roof, just a cover of plastic on the silage. Milking was a simple milking parlour, and the milk went straight through a milk cooler using tap-water for initial cooling and then into a steel tank where a refrigerator provided further cooling.

Within two years, cows were yielding an average of more than 1000 gallons per cow. Visits from farmer groups became very frequent. Approximately 25 years later, after speaking to meetings in Lismore, Co. Waterford, about European matters, an old man, on crutches, called me over "You don't know me", he said, "but you gave us a great laugh one evening". How did that happen, I enquired? "Do you remember that dairy farm you had at Ballincollig?" "Of course I remember it", I replied. "A group of us went to see it and somebody asked you what yield per cow should farmers have and you replied 1000 gls. We laughed all the way home at this mad professor". Tell me, I said "what yield per cow have ye now? "Not one of us less than 1250 gls per cow now he said. We are laughing now at our success and profits. "Thank you Professor, you gave us a laugh, but you also got us thinking".

Sean's illness and Recovery

Sometime in 1968 I had a call to say that Sean had a stroke. I went out to his house to see Phil, his wife, who was very distressed, as were her young family. Apparently he fell, unconscious and was immediately transferred to neurology unit in Dublin and then to Belfast, where they diagnosed a viral infection. In his absence I got a young Agr. Graduate, another west Cork man Jerry O'Callaghan, who in later life worked in RTE. Jerry took his work very seriously and got on well with students. Reports indicated that Sean was making good progress. He got home, after a few months, walking with the aid of a walking stick. He practised to write again with the aid of a blackboard and chalk. Gradually he made a very good recovery but regrettably he still smoked. Slowly he returned to work and within twelve months there was a little evidence of damage other than a lack of energy. He continued to improve and returned to the Sean we all knew and admired, in time.

College Administration

The principal Officers in the College were the President, the Registrar and the Secretary/Bursar. I had very little contact in the early years with the Registrar, Professor O'Ciardha (Carey). I had just one meeting with Jim Hurley. He died very soon afterwards and the President promoted the assistant Secretary Leo Whyte to the Secretary Bursar. It was a surprise to everyone in College who knew him.

My first meeting with him was for stocktaking on the farm. When it was time for stocktaking I asked Sean "who does the stocktaking for you" and Sean with a wry smile said Leo Whyte. "Leo Whyte?" I said, are you telling me that the Secretary of the 2nd largest College of the National University in Ireland is going to come out here to count buckets and bonham's, forks and shovels etc. "Yes" said Sean with a smile "and he will demand to see all the work buckets and shovels etc., before we can dispose of them". I was appalled and just said to Sean "I will stop that nonsense". "How will you do that?" said Sean with a broad smile. "I will think of something" I said and Sean laughing wished me the best of luck.

I prepared for Leo's arrival for the annual stocktaking. I decided to start him in the pig-breeding building. The staff in the pig-unit were informed on the day of his arrival that they should put in extra straw bed-

ding – as Mr. Whyte would be very pleased to see the little piglets comfortable. Little piglets are very alert and at any sign of danger they run for cover, that's how they evolved and survived in the wilds. The farm foreman, who had some run-in with Leo, was very co-operative when I *harmlessly suggested* that a little noise would make the counting piglets a very challenging exercise. As they say in the country, a wink was as good as a nod, or a nod is as good as a wink.

Each time Leo was counting a pen of bonhams, somebody would drop an empty bucket on the concrete floor which would send the little animals scurrying into the straw. He would try again when they emerged from the straw. This time it was the door of the piggery which got *caught in the wind*

and banged shut, only to have all the little ones disappear under the straw again. After sometime he admitted defeat and got into his car (he always had a good car and loved fast driving) and went out the gate like a scalded cat, and we never saw him on the farm again. Sean, who was watching from a distance, emerged from the office with a smile from ear to ear. Tell me Sean I said "Is there any retired Garda around here?", we always used a retired Garda for stocktaking in UCD. "There is one very near here and I will ask him if he would do it" said Sean. The Garda agreed and I thought that was the end of our problems with Leo, but I was wrong.

The new dairy farm in Cooleen, Ballincollig had a nice neat farm house, which was occupied by Christy and Mae. Christy was a big heavy easy going and reliable milkman. Mae was quite clearly the dominant force. Sean phoned me one day and said there is a problem with Mae. What's the problem I said?" "Mae is helping Christy with the milking" he said "and what's wrong with that" I enquired. "Because she is not being paid for the work, she is not covered by insurance" and "I can't very well tell her not to be helping Christy" said Sean. "OK", I said "I will have a word with Leo Whyte about paying her and the insurance implications if she is not being paid".

I went to Leo and explained the situation saying, which was true, that Mae was an excellent worker and that if she ceased to work, we would have to get extra help. Leo was very grumpy and he was making it very clear to me that I was giving him too much trouble. Well maybe I was.

Some couple of weeks later I was out on the farm in Cooleen and Mae saw me and made a beeline for me. I could see trouble ahead. She was outraged by the miserable cheque Leo sent to her. "Hold it Mae" I said, I had no hand act or part in deciding how much you should get, and I agree with you entirely that the cheque was far from adequate for the work you are doing. The storm abated.

"Now Mae" I said "the only way to solve this is to go into the College and see Mr. Whyte yourself, but don't go in before mid-day, as he does not come to work early and don't be afraid to tell him what you thought of the miserable sum he sent you. "Oh that's grand Professor and thanks for the advice and sympathy" she said.

Leo's Office

Leo's office was located in the beautiful stone Quad Building. To get to Leo you had to see a secretary and make an appointment, but Mae did not stand on such ceremony. She got the bus to town and headed for UCC and Leo's office. Criostoir de Baroid, who worked with some secretaries in an office beside Leo with only a glass partition between Leo and the Secretaries, witnessed or heard the performance. I accidentally met Criostoir and he started laughing about 50 yards away coming towards me. "Where did you get that woman?" said Criostoir. "What woman" "Mae from the farm in Ballincollig" said Criostoir, and then he told me what happened. Mae knocked at the Secretary's door and a girl opened the door. "What can I do for you?" she said to Mae. "I want to

see Mr. Whyte" she replied, "have you an appointment?" "No" said Mae. "Then you can't see him" said Leo's Secretary. "Out of my way girl" said Mae, shoving past her and straight into Leo's office. Leo was in the middle of files on the desk, on the window sills and on the floor. "Who are you and what do you want? said Leo. She told him. Mae let fly, telling him what a mean f.....g bastard he was etc.

All the girls in the office lived in terror of Leo and the story got around very quickly. Subsequently when he tried his bullying the girls would reply – "Now now Mr. Whyte, we will send for Mae if you don't behave yourself". His authority was undermined and he was lucky that Mae didn't give him a black eye, which she was well capable of doing. Whatever happened about the cheque, she never complained to me subsequently, so Leo must have paid up.

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" according to Shakespeare. Well a woman like Mae, who was underpaid and undervalued for her good work, can kick up a fair old stink too, as Leo discovered to his cost.

More Land

Again, I thought I had finished dealing with Leo, but again I was mistaken. There was a knock on my office door one morning and the visitor was from CIE. The disused Cork to Macroom railway line ran the full length of the two adjoining pieces of land in Ballincollig and CIE had considered problems with livestock getting onto the line and straying onto other farms. I was aware of that. He suggested that the College might purchase the line adjoining the College land. I said not at all. His sales pitch did not work, despite his best efforts. Eventually he said, we could have the land free. I rejected this too, saying the cost of fencing it from adjoining farms would be excessive. Eventually in desperation, he offered to supply the fencing material free, especially disused timber railways sleepers. I agreed "reluctantly". When I told Sean, he actually had sympathy for the poor man, but was delighted at the prospect of getting a proper fence to prevent wandering livestock from entering our land, especially at a time when Brucellosis was rampant. CIE had the land transferred and it only required that UCC would sign the deal.

I went to inform Leo about the extra land "You can't do that" he said, "It's done Leo" I said, "and if you don't sign the deal on behalf of the College, I will get the President to sign it". With that, I left his office and never had any business with him again, as the Secretary of UCC.

The new President brought in a new Secretary, Michael Kelleher and an assistant Secretary Cyril Deasy, and normality reigned between the Secretariat and myself and most other Departments too, I suspect.

Academic Matters

The Academic Council consisted of all the Professors in the College. At my first meeting of the Academic Council I saw a number of Professors, which I had never seen before, mainly from the Medical and Dentistry Departments as they had worked off campus.

The Professor of Anatomy, Professor McConnell, who gave me the army salute, was there in his army uniform. During the meeting he made a dramatic exit by bowing before the President and then turning when he reached the door, clicked his heels and gave the army salute – the Professor on my right rose and returned the salute saying "look at the fool". Otherwise he was totally ignored.

At that meeting the Registrar informed me that I had inherited two PhD theses from my predecessor. One was from a man, who was in Ballyfin with me, and I asked to be relieved of adjudicating and suggested I would find a more neutral examiner. The Registrar and President agreed with that suggestion.

The other thesis was from a Mr. Burke the

Director of MET Office. The thesis was on "Weather and Potato Blight". Having a particular interest in this subject, I look forward to reading this thesis. It was a voluminous document. A copy of it was sent to an external examiner in Queens University, Belfast, who wrote back to me a few months later along the lines that the work was worthy of a D.Sc., not just a Ph.D, but as it was submitted for a Ph.D. he was awarded the Ph.D.

Dr. Burke was the man who introduced blight warnings for farmers. The farmers would then spray the crop with sulphate of copper to protect the potato crop. He did forecast blight by checking the number of blight spores in the atmosphere. The first spore counting mechanism was erected on the roof of the Honan Biology Building, beside the Honan Chapel in UCC. This was an enormous help to potato growers, for which Dr. Burke should be acknowledged.

During my student years, we had a Professor of Plant Pathology, Robert McKay who told us, as students, that whoever bought the potato to Ireland, it certainly was not Sir Walter Raleigh, as people had been led to believe. What we do know about the potato was that Ireland was probably the last country in Europe to get the potato, but it was the first to adopt it as a staple diet.

Governments in Europe had difficulty in getting the people to accept the potato. A king of France wore a garland of potato flowers to popularise the potato. A monument was erected in North Germany to the man who popularised the potato there.

The main reason why the Irish peasants adopted the potato so readily was that the landlords had no interest in confiscating this crop for export to Britain, as they were doing with wheat. Additionally, the yield of food was up to four times that which could be got from cereals, and it could be fed very successfully to all the farm animals. It had one serious flaw however – unlike grain, it could not be stored from one season to the next and of course, no one foresaw the arrival of the blight which wiped out whole crops, leaving millions to starve or flee the country. The year 2008 was the International Year of the Potato. The lack of public interest in celebrating the year of the potato was sad, in a country so intrinsically linked to this wonderful crop.

On leaving the December Academic Council in 1964 we were confronted by a very dense fog. At that time, before central heating and smokeless coal, fogs were quite common. Not knowing the geography of the city very well, I decided to follow Professor Murphy of the Dairy Economics Department, as he lived quite close to our rented house.

Eventually, I realised he was lost, so I continued searching until I noted a store which I recognised near home. Bredhe was very worried and of course there were no mobile phones then to make contact. I was more than one hour trying to get home, which I would normally do in 10 to 15 minutes.

On Monday morning I called into Professor Murphy and told him that I tailed him on Friday evening for nearly one hour before giving up and he laughed and said "I was tailing another car, which stopped suddenly, and I bumped into him, but he was in his driveway."

Although there was a very big age-gap between professor Murphy and myself, we became great friends in College, but outside of College I rarely saw him.

Adult Education in UCC

A former President, Dr. Alfred O'Rahilly started an Adult Education programme in conjunction with the Vocational Education Committees across Munster, long before I arrived in UCC. My Predecessor, Professor Boyle, was a member of the Committee. President McHenry invited me to replace him and I was very willing to be part of this great movement which did so much to help all those people, especially those who got no chance to get 2nd level education. There

were courses on economics, sociology, rural science (mainly agriculture) etc.

The "Young Farmer" movement known as Macra na Feirme were amongst the most enthusiastic about further education, as most of them had just National School education. Now they were hungry for more knowledge. I noted that almost 100 per cent of applications from Macra Na Feirme were signed by a female, but on examining the rules I found, to my amazement, that females were not allowed to take the Rural Science courses. I questioned why this should be so at a Committee meeting. The Bishops representative on the Committee was Fr. O'Leary, a small man, like myself, but I got a very evasive answer.

At the next meeting I raised the issue of excluding women from the Rural Science courses, when women could take any other course available. Fr. O'Leary got rather annoyed with my persistence. Eventually I asked "are you afraid the boys would be courting them on the way home, and if they were, would it not be preferable to having the girls go to Dublin or London or the USA?" There was no answer and I could see the poor man was just following the Bishop's orders. I then proposed that the rule be changed and that girls should be allowed to take the course and I requested that the matter be put to a vote.

The Chairman put it to the vote and Fr. O'Leary did not get a single vote to support him. The rule was changed and no doubt I went into the Bishop's "black book". Macra members were very pleased, but, of course, they were not aware of why there was such a change and out of respect for the late Fr. O'Leary, who was only following orders, I never discussed it outside of the meeting.

Over the years, I was invited to give Adult Education lectures in every county in Munster except Co. Clare. The courses did not extend to Clare for some silly reason. I did not get that rule changed, nor did I try, which I regret.

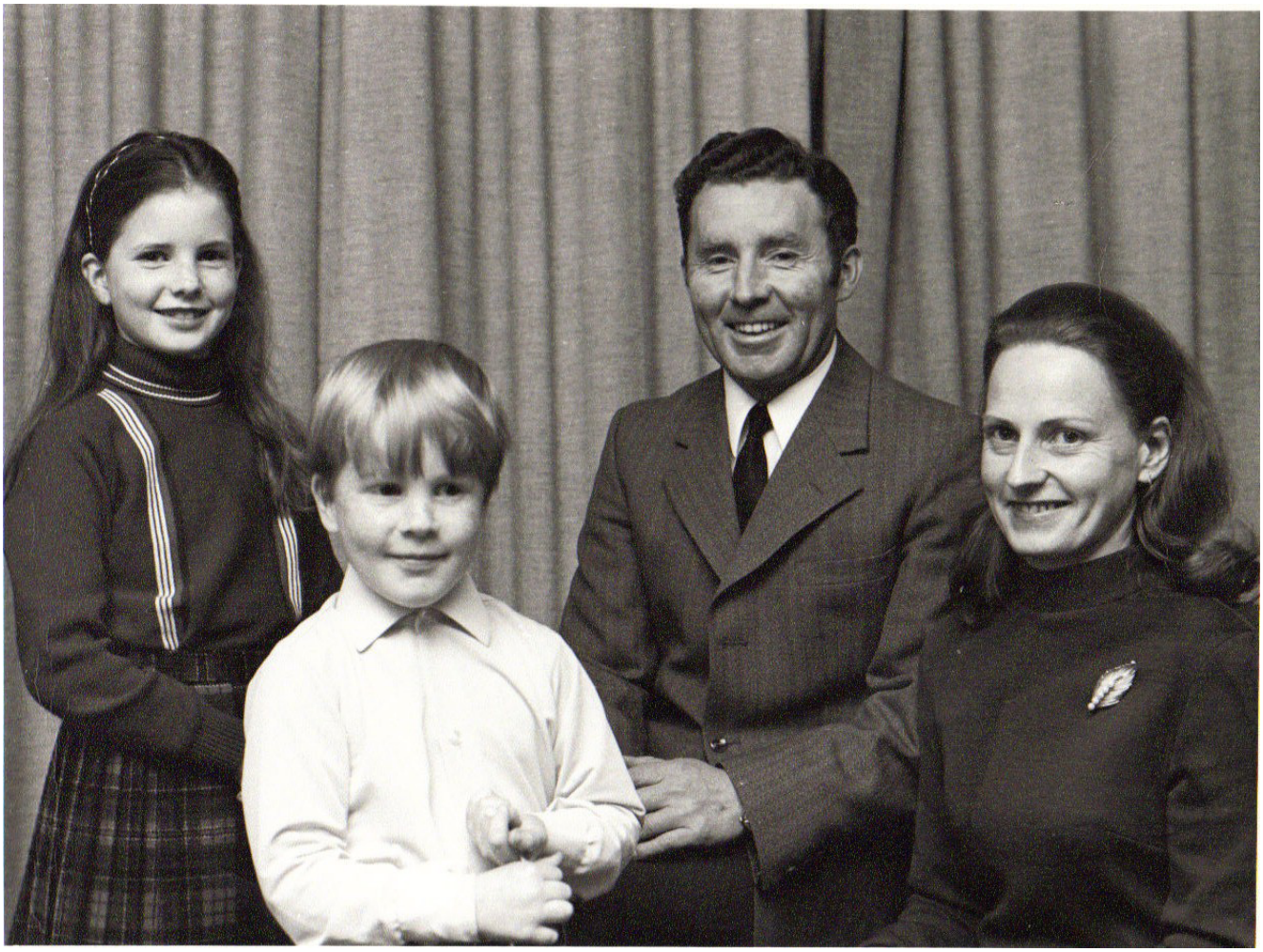
New House and New Son

The house we rented from the bank was adequate, but I was determined to have our own house. The reason why the bank owned the house was that the previous owner had a gambling problem and when his debts in the bank were excessive, he just absconded, so the bank re-possessed it.

I saw an advertisement for what appeared to be what we needed. The Auctioneer met me at the house and showed me round. It looked well and we were really interested. However, I sought a second opinion from an Engineer, who worked for John A. Wood and Co., a very well known company which was involved in the concrete and ground limestone business. The Engineer had previously consulted me about possible sites for quarrying limestone. He immediately asked me who built this house. When I told he just said "he has a bad reputation, but I will go to see it with you".

The Auctioneer took the two of us to view the house and the Engineer started making notes. The Auctioneer excused himself and the Engineer pointed out all the serious flaws saying "if there are so many obvious flaws evident, you can be sure there are plenty hidden flaws". It was a good morning's work. Subsequently the same building got into serious trouble for defective work.

I thanked the Engineer and in parting he suggested I go to see Dennis McCarthy, a very reputable builder, who was building good houses in Wilton. I met Dennis, a big West Cork man and the houses, both detached and semi-detached looked very good. He had just a couple of sites left, which were not to my liking. Seeing my disappointment, he took me across the main road into a field where there was a fine herd of Friesian cows. "I will be building here shortly" he said "and I will give you a copy of the site map and you can have the first choice of a site. He gave me a copy and Bredhe and I gave considerable thought to the choice of site and in time it proved to be a very good site indeed.



Family photo c 1973

I signed up for the site and paid a deposit. I saw the house going up and was impressed by the work. The Solicitor drew up the Contract which showed the price, but there was a price variation clause, with no upper limit. "That is like signing a blank cheque" I said "and I am not signing it." "Well every other client has signed it" he said. That maybe, but I am not signing it". After some agreement we agreed on £100 for a price variation clause and I signed on.

When the house was completed we were going on a caravan holiday and Dennis McCarthy was to meet us at the house to hand over the keys. He arrived in his big Mercedes and promptly announced that he would not give me the keys, because of what I did in relation to the price variation clause. "That's OK Dennis" I said "and when I bet back from holidays I will park the caravan here and tell everybody why you refused to give me the keys". He drove off at high speed but was back very quickly to hand me the keys. No doubt he figured that he would have trouble with those who signed on without an upper limit on the price variation, if they heard of the deal I got.

The farmer, who sold the land to Mr. McCarthy bought a farm a few miles further out. The farm house which he vacated became a Garda Station, so we had a Garda Station right behind our bank garden – a very welcome step. Subsequently, the new Regional Hospital (known by the wags as the Wilton Hilton) was opened and shortly afterwards Roches and Tesco Stores were opened on the African Mission's land – the land which Dr. Fitzgerald and I tried to buy for extra pitches for UCC students. A little further out in Bishopstown, the Regional College now known as CIT (Cork Institute of Technology) was opened. All in all, we could scarcely have chosen a better site and in addition to that the neighbours have been excellent.

The year after moving in our son Thomas, a red head like his mother, was born, but given the deterioration in Bredhe's health, the medical advice was that she should not have another pregnancy.

Now, over forty years later, I can truly say that the choice of location was, probably one of the best decisions we ever made.

Regime change in UCC and dairy farming for myself

President McHenry retired in 1968 and he was replayed by Dr. McCarthy from the CSO Office, and father of the young man I rejected in favour of Sean O'Donovan. President McCarthy, unlike President McHenry, had plenty administration experience and he set about re-organising the administration system. In the process, Leo was sidelined and Michael Kelleher, who had considerable experience in the commercial world, was appointed as Secretary and Cyril Deasy as assistant Secretary. Order was introduced where confusion had reigned.

In the process of change he also ruffled a lot of feathers, amongst the academic staff. For reasons that I did not fully understand, Senator Professor Quinlan of the Engineering Faculty and Rev. Professor Peter Dempsey, Professor of Psychology were particularly annoyed. As far as I was concerned, he was dismissive of the work in my Department and I was concerned about his future plans for it.

I was aware of Professor Quinlan, long before I came to UCC, as he was involved in agricultural policy issues. He was born and reared on a dairy farm at Ballincranna, which is roughly half-way between the towns of Kilmallock and Kilfinnane, in County Limerick. Because of his interest in farming, he became a great supporter of mine. Paddy, as we all knew him, was a very bright mathematician, specialising in Maths-physics, but he involved himself in various other issues, about which he knew very little. One of these issues was the Billings method of birth control, which his wife Jane was actively promoting. Paddy was a regular visitor to our house, so I poked fun at him about the Billings method. He conceded that it was not 100% effective, saying that if you wanted a family of three, you might have five, to which I replied, if you wanted none, you might have three. Subsequently, Bredhe pleaded with me to drop the issue. He liked a little drop of whiskey, which was not allowed in his home. Overall he was delightful company, but for a very intelligent man he had a great deficit in common sense. He was also, by any standard, the worst car diver that I ever travelled with. Indeed, it was scary to travel with him, but it was also very amusing.

One evening, he called to our house in a state of distress. His brother Michael, who had married a woman who owned a farm, decided to sell the home farm. He was so distressed that Bredhe suggested that Paddy and myself should buy the farm or buy a share in the farm with Michael. That appealed to him, but of course we could not raise that kind of money. Eventually, a friend of mine Paddy O'Donovan, a farmer/builder agreed to buy 25% and Michael agreed to retain 25% share, so there was four of us in the enterprise, but O'Donovan would only be involved on condition that I would decide policy, select staff and manage cash flow. That was all agreed, but I had to go to the Munster and Leinster bank to borrow the money for my share. The bank refused, which disappointed me. The Bank of Ireland in the South Mall was almost directly opposite the Munster and Leinster, so I went across the street and into the Bank of Ireland. At that time the UCC account was with the Bank of Ireland and the Manager Mr. Magahy was well aware of my activities in UCC. He just produced a form to transfer my account from the Munster and Leinster which I signed and the money was made available to purchase a 25% share. So now I was back with Bank of Ireland again. The Company was then formed and working capital was

also forthcoming and the operation started.

Paddy O'Donovan was too busy in his own operations to concern himself. Michael's wife got very ill, so he took a back seat. Paddy made the occasional visit and all four of us met a couple of times per year. The operation was managed, at local level, by a man who had got his work experience on my brother-in-laws farm in Kilkenny, where he ran a very successful dairy farm. His name was Pat Freeney. I tried to visit it every weekend, and I phoned a couple of times per week or Pat phoned me at home in the evenings. Thirty acres of adjoining land came on the market and we bought it. The farm was one of the largest milk suppliers to the Golden Vale Processing Plant in Charleville. The processing plant was managed by Mr. Dave O'Loughlin, a former Irish International rugby player and his son Kerry was one of my undergraduate students.

Dave of course, was very happy to have such a large supplier of high quality milk. I got a call from Dave one day, asking me to call the next time I was visiting the farm, as he wanted some advice on a topic which he was reluctant to tell me over the phone.

Shortly after, I called to see him. Tea and biscuits were put on his desk. What can I do for you Dave, I enquired? We have a post to be filled here and two of your post-graduate students have applied. The Board asked me to have a word with you before offering the job. "What is the job?" I asked. "Overseeing the erection and commissioning of a new milk drying plant to make milk substitute for calf feeding" he said. "Brosnan is your man", I said. "Oh Christ", said Dave, the interview board selected the other man". "Well Dave", I said, "if it was a research type job the other man would certainly be my choice, but for this task, Brosnan is the man, in my honest view". Dave looked very worried. "To help matters Dave", I said, "I will write to you setting out the reasons why I would choose Brosnan."

I did write to him and Dennis Brosnan was offered the job. When the plant was commissioned, I got a call from Dennis to see the new plant. I accepted the invitation. The building housing of the plant was not pretty, but inside the stainless steel plant was very impressive but also rather noisy. "Do you get any complaints about noise at night" I asked "Just one" said Dennis. "The plant broke down one night and a fellow from across the road there , living alone, came over next day saying that he could not sleep, because he missed the droning dull noise from the plant."

Dennis then proceeded proudly to show me the automatic weighing and bagging of the product and the special measure he had for measuring out the product to be mixed with water for calf feeding. The measure filled to the top was correct for a gallon of water. "Dennis" I said, "there will be trouble with that measure, because farmers will fill it by pushing the measure into the dried powder thereby compressing the powder and getting more in the measure than should be in it". "We will put a note on the side of the measure", he said and it will be OK. Roughly three weeks later on St. Patrick's Day, when I was resting in bed, due to a heavy cold, Paddy O'Donovan phoned me in distress. A number of calves had died and several more were ill after feeding them "Maverick – the milk substitute, which Dennis was making, and on which the College calves were thriving. I advised him to withdraw the Maverick immediately and to give water only to the remainder of the calves for 24 hours. I also got in touch with Dennis and he sent his salesmen to the farmer. They asked the farm staff to repeat what they were doing in making up the feed for the calves. On measuring the dry matter content of the feed, they found that dry matter was much higher than it should be, due to the manner in which the measure was used – my fears were justified, and my friend Paddy O'Donovan was compensated.

Some years later a group of dairy farmers from North Kerry, a dairying area led by

Mr. Eddie Hayes, a good member of the IFA (Irish Farmers Association) were anxious to set up a milk processing plant. Eddie consulted me and I recommended the "neighbours child" as they say, Dennis Brosnan, and the rest is history. He went on to build up one of the most successful food processing companies in the world, buying into meat plants in Ireland and various successful ventures in the USA and elsewhere.

I last met Dennis in August 2001, when he invited Bredhe and myself to lunch in his beautiful house "Croom House" in Croom, Co. Limerick. Afterwards there were two days golf and accommodation in Adare Manor, Co. Limerick, which was wonderful and all the more wonderful when I took twenty five punts from him on the golf course.

While we were playing golf Dennis supplied us with Kerry Water. "Where have you got the water plant Dennis"? I enquired. "Back on the Dingle peninsula" said Dennis. "Is it a large plant"? I enquired, to which I got the amazing answer from Dennis "I don't know", said Dennis, "I never saw it" "How did that happen"? I enquired – to which Dennis replied, "There was a plant there, which was in commercial difficulty – so I sent a few of the staff to examine it. They reported back that it was a good plant with a good water supply, so I bought it and it's profitable, so why would I be wasting my time going back to Dingle to see a successful operation?" Dennis, who was responsible for many plants in Ireland, USA and elsewhere, was careful to use his time where there were problems and to leave well enough alone where there were none.

Chapter 9 – Study tours

Study Tours

The thought occurred to me that a trip to the European continent to study methods of food production, processing and marketing would benefit the graduate students, as it had greatly benefited myself in 1960. In 1968 I suggested it to the final year students and they were very enthusiastic about the idea, but how could it be funded? I suggested I would approach the Munster and Leinster Bank, where I had a good friend, Dennis McCarthy, who was the Agricultural Relations officer for the Bank.

Denis thought it was a good idea, but it would need the approval of the Manager Mr. Tom Casey. Tom called me and I put the case to him. Given the amount of business the bank had with the farmers and processing co-operatives, plus livestock co-operative livestock marts, it was easy to persuade him.

The students organised some functions to make some money, so the decision to go was made. I planned to go mainly to research the processing plants which I had been to in 1960. All of them were very willing to help, when I put it to them.

First Stop

We flew to Amsterdam on a fine Sunday morning and settled into a modest hotel, near the city centre. The boys were fascinated by the number of cyclists and the canals, which were very busy with boats carrying tourists. After a light meal at about 7pm., I took them on a walking trip for a surprise visit – to the Red-Light district, where the ladies for hire sat inside large glass windows on the left side of the street and on the right side were some coffee shops, which were licensed to sell some drugs.

The reaction of the young men, who at home considered themselves tough guys and some of them were tough Gaelic players, was very interesting. Overall, they were shocked and scandalised. They wanted out of the area quickly and we returned to our hotel where we retired to the bar for a drink. In those days, of course, very few of them had travelled. "Now lads, what did ye think of that?", I said. They were unanimous in their condemnation. These beautiful girls could be our sisters and it's a scandal etc. I absorbed all the negativity and then I put the other side of the story.

Prostitution is legal in Holland and it's regulated by the Government. The girls have a set minimum income, plus healthcare and protection of the law. Contrast that with what is happening in Ireland, where girls who go with prostitution are controlled by what are known as Pimps, all well known criminals, who take most of the money the girls get. They are regularly beaten up by these criminals and dumped or forced to have an abortion by these criminals and could be jailed for prostitution. "Abortion is illegal in Ireland" one boy said. "Yes, I know" I replied, "but that does not mean there is no abortion". I explained that when I was their age, there was an abortion case which shocked the nation. A woman, nurse Cadden, who drove a very fancy sports car around Dublin, was found guilty of murder, following an abortion which went wrong and the woman bled to death. Her body was found near nurse Cadden's apartment in Hume Street.

The apartment was found to be well equipped for abortion purposes and judging by Nurse Cadden's lifestyle, she had a thriving business. Then of course, there were a considerable number of girls who went to England to have an abortion. "As you probably know lads, girls at home, who have babies out of wedlock, have the child taken from them and they are confined in what are known as Magdelan Laundries, named after Saint Mary Magdelin. These girls were shunned by their parents and family and treated very harshly by the nuns". This was in stark contrast to what the bible tells us that Jesus forgave Mary Magdelin saying "go now and sin no

more".

The babies were reared in orphanages by nuns. As boys grew up they were put into what were known as industrial schools, where they learned some trades such as carpentry, shoe mending etc. However, it appears they got very little education, as was obvious to me, from the few of them that I met.

Years later, we were all shocked to hear of clerical sex abuse of children, in these schools and outside of these schools. The response of our bishops was to move on the offending Priest or Brother to "pastures new", where they re-offended again and again. Children who reported such abuse were not believed and were punished for "telling lies", by parents or teachers. I feel sorry for those who were abused and for the vast majority of the innocent clergy, who worked hard and educated people when and where the State failed to do so – they all felt "tarred by the same brush". Their arrogant and powerful Bishops had let them and all practising Catholics down, by not exposing these as guilty and not having reported them to Officers of the Law.

With that, I told them to go to bed and to be at breakfast by 7.30am. No doubt they wondered whether I telling them the truth. Now we know that it was much worse than what I had told them!

The boys were all there for breakfast, knowing full well, that I would leave them behind if they were not on the little bus in time. We visited some pasturising and bottling plants and in the afternoon, I took them to the Rikes Museum and Art Gallery – one of the most famous in the world – to see it all would require a whole day, so I just went to a few areas where I had been in the past with my wife Bredhe, who loved art.

I can still see the faces of these "wild young men" when they studied the "Night Watch" by Rembrandt. A member of staff in the gallery was kind enough to talk to us about Rembrandt and to point out the various people in the painting from the lowly Town Crier or Bell Ringer to the Mayor of Amsterdam.

Almost certainly, these boys nearly all from rural areas, were never in an art gallery before, but judging by their awe and interest, I felt they would visit galleries in the future.

Then on to Denmark

We boarded an overnight train to Copenhagen. Shortly we reached the German border where passports had to be produced. After that, I got a few hours sleep, but on reaching the Danish border, the passports were again checked.

The land in South Denmark was all under tillage crops, barley, sugar beet, wheat potatoes etc., for mile after mile. Suddenly, I heard a voice from the next carriage saying "Where are all these cows that Prof was talking about in Denmark?" I answered that later in the day. Copenhagen is a beautiful city. It was founded as a fishing village about 1150AD and had grown into a city of nearly one million people. The lack of litter on the streets was very evident and like Amsterdam, the bicycle was a very popular means of getting around. I took the boys to meet Hans Larsen, who had lectured for a year in UCD and Broland Larsen, who lectured many times to farmer organisations in Ireland. The talks and discussions were very useful.

Broland brought in the Professor of Agricultural Economics, whose name, I think, was Rasmussen and he gave very much the same fundamentals of Agricultural Economics, which the "Bomber" Murphy gave in UCC. That, no doubt, increased their already high esteem of Prof (The Bomber) Michael Murphy.

Following coffee and biscuits, we departed and the boys were very pleased with what they heard and stimulated about the potential which was so unexploited at home. We visited various kinds of processing plants over the next few days.

In one of these plants we were invited out for dinner. The starter was raw soused herring. I stood up as they were eating the starter and announced that the herring was raw. This was a surprise to them. "Would you have eaten it before you started the meal if you knew it was raw?" and they were unanimous that they would not. "Now will you continue to eat it?" All of them said "yes" except for one boy. Ironically, he subsequently became Professor of Food Technology in UCC, some years later.

When I worked in UCD, a Danish farmer was invited over to speak to Irish Co-Op Leaders. I invited him to speak to the Agricultural Students in the Albert College. He was a man of about 30-35 years, with excellent English and a fine sense of humour. Before our trip to Denmark, I had made contact with him and he invited the group to visit his farm on a Sunday afternoon. Both himself and his wife were most gracious and for hungry students, most generous with the food helpings, as we had a picnic in the lawn, just in front of his typical Danish farmhouse. It was truly a lovely experience.

In addition to visiting research stations and processing plants, plus the farm visit, we visited tourist attractions such as the beautiful Konigsburg Castle, plus fishing villages and of course the Mermaid in the harbour and the home of Hans Christian Anderson.

Finally, we were taken to the highest hill in Denmark, which was a mere 500 metres. Our guide was surprised and disappointed when the boys were not impressed – yes Denmark like Holland is a very flat country.

We took a day off, before flying home, to give the boys a chance to see more of Copenhagen. I remember one of them being scandalised, in a paper and book shop, when he saw the nudity on the cover of a magazine, on a shelf low enough for children to view, just as we can see in Ireland today.

When we arrived in Cork Airport, one of them made a presentation to me, and a little speech thanking me for the trip. I had not expected this and I thanked them sincerely for their generosity, and we all went our separate ways.

Bredhe and our two young children were there to meet me. On opening the gift wrapped box at home, we were astonished to see the most beautiful tea-set of six cups, saucers and side plates. The cups and saucers in particular were lavishly trimmed in gold and within each cup was a beautiful painting of scenes from Denmark, many of which we had viewed on the trip. I could scarcely believe the taste and generosity of these young men. Bredhe, refused to use these exotic and beautiful pieces, preferring instead to put them on display in a glass fronted cabinet where they still are and will remain.

Someone of the group got the idea to have a get-together in the autumn to discuss the trip. That was an idea I welcomed and I invited the bank manager Tom Casey to hear what these boys had to say about their travels. Tom could not attend, but he sent a senior executive a Mr. Bill Hayden, whom I did not know.

An enterprising young quiet lad surprised me, by giving a detailed account of the trip, aided by good photographs, projected onto a screen. I felt very proud of them as nearly all of them participated in the discussion. Mr. Hayden must have been very impressed, because Tom Casey phoned me and asked if I could take their Agricultural Relations Officer, Mr. Dennis McCarthy on such a trip sometime. "Of course" I replied and I interpreted that to mean that the Munster and Leinster would continue to fund such trips, and so it turned out.

The following August I had a call from Professor Rasmussen, who gave the talk on Dairy and Food Economics to the Irish students who I brought to Denmark. I was pleased that he remembered us. Then he informed me that he and his wife were coming for a holiday in West Cork. I agreed to meet them and took them to our home.

He lacked the humour of the other Danes I had become acquainted with, being more interested in Irish history etc. On his return from the holiday in West Cork, he visited again and this time he posed the following question. Why did West Cork suffer more in the famine that most parts in Ireland, when, as he said "the fish were almost giving themselves up there?" I felt the mackerel must have been in, when he was there. I tried to explain that the people were so poor that they had no boats, and people twenty or thirty miles from the sea had no means of transport etc. I felt he was not exactly convinced by my explanations. In truth, I don't fully understand it myself.

My Last and most stressful tour 1973

This tour also started in Amsterdam, but unlike the previous tours, I had some stressful moments due to the eldest man Mr. Dennis McCarthy of the Munster and Leinster Bank and a student Maurice (Moss) Keane, a huge and wild Kerry man. I knew Dennis long before I came to Cork. When my eldest brother was trying to establish a Livestock Mart and a Creamery in Athenry, there was just one bank in Athenry, the Ulster Bank and it was not prepared to help finance the projects. Somebody advised him to contact the Munster and Leinster Bank, which he did, and Dennis McCarthy arrived in Athenry to meet the Committee of which my brother Padraic was Chairman. Dennis, I believe, consulted with the county Committee of Agriculture, and he recommended the project should be funded by his bank. The project went ahead and the Munster and Leinster set up a very small office, directly across the road from the Ulster Bank.

The cattle mart was a great success financially and livestock fairs on the streets of Athenry died out. The new bank did very well in Athenry and overall Athenry and the hinterland benefited. Dennis was delighted and he became a great friend of our family. When I was living in Dublin, Dennis often got in touch with me for a drink, a chat and a laugh, but Dennis was very fond of whiskey and as a result, he lost his driving licence for 12 months. During that time his wife Eileen drove him to the many commitments he had with farming groups around the country.

His eldest son Brian, who worked in the Munster and Leinster Bank in Killorglin, started a company FEXCO, which became a resounding success, at home and overseas, especially in the USA.

Moss Keane, was a huge, very clever student, with an enormous capacity for alcoholic drink and for vulgar stories. He palled around with another Kerry man, O'Meara, who was slightly taller than but nowhere as heavy as Mossy and certainly far from being as intelligent, but he was a more civilised and gentle character.

Between them, they procured a motor vehicle a Fiat 600, the smallest car on Irish roads. In order to fit into this little car, they grew out the two front seats and drove from the back. Moss did the driving and because the lock on the door at the driver's side was out of order, he had to keep it closed with the aid of his elbow, with the window open. At that time there was no testing of cars, so they got around in this little heap of scrap.

Money was scarce at that time, especially for students running a car and thirsty for drink, so plot had to be hatched up. Moss thought of a plan. He procured two white coats from the Dairy Science Lab., and a bucket and mop. They would then wait outside the Imperial Hotel, or any other hotel where there was a wedding feast. When proceedings were in full swing, the two giants would don the white coats and with a bucket and mop, walk past the doorman, saying "vomit in here to be cleaned up". Having gained entry, they would discard the white coats, bucket and mop and join the guests at the bar where drinks flowed freely. Only once, did the father of the bride catch them out, but he took it in good humour and let them have a free drink.

Moss played full back for the College Gael-

ic Football Team and for the Kerry Football Team. Despite his size and strength, he was not a dirty player, but a referee, made a very harsh decision against him one day sending him off. Moss was quite justifiably incensed and when he was invited to play rugby he was delighted. Within a very short time he was on the Munster team, shortly thereafter on the Irish and team and next on the British and Irish Lions team to play New Zealand, in New Zealand – what a lucky day it was for Moss when the referee sent him off, in the Gaelic game. All of this was mainly after he graduated. He got 50 Irish rugby caps in all, before retiring.

Now, however, he was listed on the group of students for our tour. Just before boarding, the plane in Cork Airport, Moss was missing. No one knew where he had gone to. I suspected he was upstairs in the bar. I ran up the stairs and there he was, alone, with five empty pint glasses on the table and sixth in his hand. "Moss, what are you up to", I said. "Jaysus Prof., I am shitscared of flying" "Well, you won't be flying if you don't come down immediately" I said as we have been called for boarding. He followed like a lamb, not a word out of the usual "court jester".

We had a group photo taken by one of the students and we boarded for Amsterdam. Following booking in at our hotel, I led them including Dennis McCarthy, to the red-light street as I did in 1968. Dennis was distinctly uncomfortable and Moss Keane had regained all his old buffoonery in his loud raucous voice. This carry on, annoyed the locals, one of whom threw a quantity of water down from an upper story. Dennis panicked saying "let's get out of here", adding "what would Tom Casey say if he know I was in the Red Light District?" To which I replied "what would Bishop Lucey, as a member of the Governing Body of UCC say if he knew I was leading young men into such an area?"

Dennis and I retreated back to the hotel, as did the students shortly after. I went through the same arguments with the students, as I had done previously in 1968, regarding legalised and regulated prostitution as opposed to our prostitution, which is controlled by criminals.

Finally, I told them the bus was leaving at 7.30am., the only complaint about the time was from Dennis. However, when I told him we were going to the Flower Market in Aalsmeer, he suddenly got all enthusiastic. I know that Dennis had built up a considerable amount of greenhouses in which he and some of the family were developing a very successful business, producing tomatoes and flowers. One of his daughters had also started a little flower shop in Cork, which subsequently became a very successful business.

Alsmeer Flower Market

Alsmeer is a small town, very close to Schipol Airport. I knew it by reputation, but I had no idea of the scale of flower sales. We all knew about Dutch tulips, from the song Tulips from Amsterdam, but the scale of what we saw in the Flower Market at Alsmeer, was awesome. The covered space is so large that staff got around on bicycles and on the little grey Ferguson tractors, the best known tractor on farms in Ireland, at that time.

The statistics of sales was truly staggering. One surprise was that tulip sales were insignificant, because of the very short flowering season. Tulip bulbs were contributing more than tulip flowers, our guide told us. The biggest flower sales were roses, because of the very long flowering season. The sales exports of roses alone exceeded the exports of the Irish Dairy Industry, at that time. "Where were they exported to?" I enquired. Without hesitation, he said, "the whole world" and showed us the documentation on a consignment of roses which was destined for Buenos Aires. The market was just on the perimeter of the airport.

Now I began to understand, why a little country, marginally larger than our province of Munster, could support approx-

imately 16 million people, could employ more people on the land and could generate more income from exports off the land than we could, despite the extra land we had and our small market at home. The planes were specially altered to service the flowers from Alsmeer for ease of loading, stacking and air temperature and humidity, so that they arrived very fresh, even as far away as Buenos Aires.

The Dutch Auction

There was a line of small theatre-like auction rooms behind glass where we could view proceedings. Serious buyers had to purchase their seat for the season. As they sat there, in total silence, they were plied with coffee, snacks and cigars.

Samples of flowers were rolled in on a small flat trolley. A large type clock where the hand began to move anti-clockwise dropping the price and the first to press the button in the little panel in front of him was the buyer. The clock's hand moved back up to the maximum price and the process was repeated all over again. It was weird to see these buyers, in silence, watching the clock, pressing the buttons, and making notes of their purchases, and smoking cigars or drinking coffee.

There was a total contrast to auctions that I had been accustomed to where auctioneers were shouting and bidding up prices, until bidding stopped and the auctioneer shouted sold. Following this visit, we had a general discussion on Ireland versus Holland.

Dennis was elated and gave his views on the poor performance of Irish agriculture. I put my own view, and as usual I made the point of the serious lack of education of those using our most valuable resource. I put my point of view as follows – farmers in Ireland, by and large leave school at 14 years and have no further education. Approximately 10% of those entering farming have been to an agricultural college and those who had 2nd level education, whether in an agricultural college or any 2nd level school performed significantly better than those who ceased education at 14 years.

The proof of that was very plain to see, yet governments failed to do much about it. After lunch we visited a milk processing plant, which was making varieties of cheese, which these boys had never before seen.

We were booked into a small roadside motel, for the night. It was comfortable and I got a great sleep. The following morning as I was having breakfast, a Manager came to my table to ask me "how was the old man"? "Why" I enquired, to which he replied "the big man and the old man they drink last night. The old man, he fell under the table and the big man he put him on his shoulder, carried him up the stairs, opened that door", pointing to the door on the landing, "throws the old man onto the bed, closed the door and went to his own room". God, I thought, Dennis could be dead. I ran up the stairs, knocked on the door, I heard a groan and looked in. Dennis looked terrible. I helped him to his feet, gave him a drink of water and helped him downstairs. He refused when the Manager offered to call a doctor. Clearly he slept in his clothes. I was very concerned about his condition, as were a few of the students, but not Moss, who was in great form.

I sat in the front seat with Dennis, as we drove south into Germany on the Autobahn. From the back of the bus I could hear Moss saying "Jasus lads this Ausfart must be a terribly important place, there are signs for it everywhere". These were the exit signs and no doubt Moss knew that, but he could not resist being the funny man. Meantime, it was clear to me that Dennis was very sick. He ate nothing for lunch, just kept drinking water, as I encouraged him to do. We visited the Westpalia plant which made milking machines, milk processing equipment and brewing equipment. They took us to a nearby brewery, where we were entertained with coffee, beer, biscuits and sandwiches. Dennis took water. His condition improved slowly,

during the day, to my great relief.

The following day we visited a pig processing plant, which was no better than what we now had at home in Cork, as we were on our way back to Schipol. We arrived safely in Cork, where the students presented me with a bottle of Jameson and for a variety of reasons, it was the last trip I organised for the students.

Fortunately, other staff members continued to lead students and in 1987 when I was a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) they visited the Parliament in Strasbourg, where I was delighted to receive them, although these students were not known to me. I was gone, but not forgotten. They presented me with a beautiful but simple white crochet of Bunratty Castle on a black background, behind glass in a simple timber frame with a small silver plate etched with the words:

PRESENTED TO

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

BY

UCC DAIRY AND FOOD SCIENCE SOCIETY 30-6-87

I hung it where I had to see it twice per day – beside the door to my bedroom, where it will stay for the rest of my days.

Ballyfin remembered me too. I got a message that students from Ballyfin were coming to the Parliament in Strasbourg.

I went to meet them, bringing Joe McCartin MEP and Mark Clinton former Minister for Agriculture and now an MEP. To my great surprise, nearly half of the students were girls – (clearly I was in Ballyfin too early!) It had become a large day school which admitted girls as well as boys. They were led by Brother Maurice, who I did not know, but he reminded me that he taught my son, also named Tom. It was obvious they were much better informed about current affairs than I was, at their age. Of course, the coming of TV could have been responsible for at least some of that. Years later I had considerable contact with Brother Maurice, during the restoration work in Ballyfin House.

Moss Keane went on to be a National and International celebrity, not alone for his rugby performance, but also for his famous or infamous personality. Personally, I avoided him like a plague, for there was no escaping a drink or two or more if I met Moss. Then I heard he was put off the drink for health reasons. During this time I accidentally met him in Killarney Golf Club. I said "How are you Moss? You are looking well". Moss replied with the question – Prof do you know the three stages of a man's life?" I said "No", and Moss said "Youth, middle age and you are looking well". After a few words, I had to go and wished him well.

Shortly thereafter I heard he was back on the drink again and that with the help of Bill Keane, he had published a book "Rucks, Mauls and Gaelic Football". I bought the book and it was typical Moss – his time playing Gaelic Football, but mostly about his rugby career during which he was capped 50 times for Ireland, told as only Moss could tell it, with humour and vulgarity.

He worked for the Irish Department of Agriculture, but never reached the levels worthy of his intelligence and knowledge, probably because of the drink and his sometimes reckless behaviour. Like him or not, you could not ignore him. Personally I liked him, despite his behaviour on the trip to Holland and Germany, when he gave me such trouble due to his drinking with Dennis.

Within approximately 20 years we were up to speedwith the processing, but sadly too many of our milk producers were still lagging behind. However they are now gaining ground as a new generation, of better educated farmers take over.

New Zeland Tour

Dr.Henry Kennedy, had for many years been promoting the practises of New Zealand dairy farming. He joked himself that he discovered New Zealand. Certainly, in terms of grass-based milk production, he was the first promoter of the New Zealand systems.

In 1972, the ever active Editor of the Irish Farmers Journal decided to lead a tour to New Zealand to study milk production, processing and marketing. The tour was to last one month and the cost was reasonable, but beyond my personal means. However, by one means and another, including borrowing, I secured enough to pay my way. To my surprise President McCarthy was favourably disposed, but there was no money forthcoming. We assembled at Heathrow Airport in London. Farmers from Donegal to Cork, and Galway to Dublin, plus a few who had little or no interest in dairy farming joined us to "see the world", I presume.

The first leg of the flight was London to Los Angeles, over the frozen arctic. The plane, a new Boeing jumbo jet was absolutely huge by the standards at that time. It was spacious and relatively comfortable. The trip, as I remember it, took about 9 hours. During the flight, the pilot came down from the cockpit, which was on an upper deck to talk to the passengers. Seeing this, one of our group went up to him asking, "Who the hell is piloting the plane now?" The pilot reassured him that there was more than one pilot and not to worry, but I could see that the man was not fully reassured. Obviously this man had never flown much.

We stayed in Los Angeles, overnight and got a tour of Hollywood in the morning. The tour guide told us who was in each of the large houses – Dean Martin, Bob Hope and Marilyn Monroe etc. It was just boring and he could just be telling us a pack of lies for all we knew. In any case, I doubt if many of our group cared one iota who lived where in this world of make believe.

From Los Angeles, we flew to Honolulu and we were booked into a hotel just across from the beach. Having booked in, everybody wanted to go for a swim in the Pacific. As we were all enjoying the warm waters, I saw crowds on the promenade pointing towards us and laughing. The water was very salty, compared to Irish waters and therefore more buoyant. Showers were installed at the promenade where you could stand and be washed down with fresh water to get rid of the salt. As I am not a good swimmer, I took an early shower. When I looked back to the sea I could see what they were laughing at. The Irish group looked so white amongst all other visitors in the sea. It is really true that the Celts, particularly the Irish, Welsh and Scots have the whitest skin in the world and it is also true that this causes them to be more prone to skin cancer in very sunny climates. The statistics on this are quite clear in places like Australia, California, Florida etc. That evening Jerome Buttimer, an excellent dairy farmer from Cork and probably the oldest man in the group and myself, went to an open air bizarre to see what was on sale. A beautiful young girl was serving and I asked what nationality she was. She said her father was from the Check Republic and her mother was from Lithuania, but you two are from Ireland, she replied. "How did you know that" I asked. "Look at the colour of your skin", she replied - So it is recognised internationally that the Irish are very white skinned. Actually neither Jerome or myself would be seen as very fair skinned at home, because we were outdoors more than most people.

Next day, after some tours around fruit farms, we took a flight southwards towards New Zealand. The plane stopped in the early morning to re-fuel at a tiny airport in a little place called Pango, Pango. There was scarcely any building and the few small buildings were thatched, with some kind of leaves. We learned that this place was just an American military re-fuelling base.

Coconut trees were everywhere. One from our group managed to get a few coconuts off the trees, but no effort to open the fruit was successful. The natives, with very little clothes and no shoes, were in hysteric laughter seeing fellows hopping the fruit off the concrete and others using stones to break the shell of the fruit, unsuccessfully. Then a native stepped forward with a heavy type knife and with just one blow, split a coconut in halves. The milk from the centre of the fruit was beautiful and i was lucky enough to get a piece of the hard white interior flesh which I chewed on, in the last step of our journey. It tasted wonderful.

During the next step of the flight we crossed the date line, where we were advised to adjust our watches, and in the process we lost a calendar day – all very confusing, until you remember the earth is round and rotating.

Arriving into Auckland, we could see the very impressive bridge, but a city with very few tall buildings. Following our booking into a hotel, we were taken to a local dairy farm which was supplying milk to a bottling plant for the city. Nothing very exciting about that, but I was surprised at what I saw in his garden..oranges, lemons, Chinese gooseberries and tamarillos or tree tomatoes.

Before going to New Zealand, most farmers believed that the climate in New Zealand was the same as we had in Ireland and of course the climate in parts of New Zealand is similar to what we have in Ireland. The 40 degree latitude went through roughly the centre of New Zealand which would be equivalent to the latitude through New York and Madrid in the Northern Hemisphere.

But New Zealand is approximately four times the size of Ireland and from the tip of the North Island to the tip of the South Island spans 1000 miles. Additionally it's a very mountainous island, with snow capped mountains year round, especially in the South Island.

In the north of the north island it was usual to see orange and lemon trees in almost every farmer's garden. There was also another tree which bore red fruit like small apples; referred to locally as tree tomatoes, but I did not like the taste of them. Some farmers also had shrub-type trees with fruit they called Chinese gooseberries. For me these Chinese gooseberries tasted wonderful, but alas they did not do well in the markets.

Some years later they consulted a marketing man who was very impressed by the fruit, but not at all impressed by the name Chinese gooseberries. He suggested they market them under the brand name kiwi fruit and, as they say, the rest is history. Shortly thereafter kiwi fruit was available in Ireland and now kiwi fruit is one of New Zealand's great exports. Their biggest exports of course are dairy products, New Zealand lamb meat and beef.

Visiting Farms

Dairy farms in New Zealand ranged in cow numbers from large, by our standards, approximately 150 cows to very large 400-500 cows. The cows were of mixed breeds, Jersey, Jersey-Friesian crosses and Friesians. All cows had one thing in common – their tails had been cut off. This was for hygiene purposes. Also it reduced the spread of leptospirosis, which is a very serious disease for humans.

Other things farmers had in common were – all farmers used bulk milk tanks with refrigerated units. All farmers used herringbone type milking parlours, although a few were installing rotary parlours, where the cows went onto a rotary carousel and the milk men were standing putting on the teat cups as the cow passed by. All farmers had to have a loop road, at the dairy, so that the lorry collecting the milk could just turn in one move, after picking up the milk – no time wasting, reversing etc. If the loop road was not up to standard, the milk was not collected.

Most farmers had a little hut on the roadside, where they put the baby calves that were going for sale. If there were calves in the hut, a small flag was run up so that the lorry driver collecting calves, could see from 500 yards away whether or not he should stop.

On the back of each of these trucks, collecting calves was a weighing scale. The lorry driver dropped each calf on the scale, recorded its weight and left a copy of the weights in the little hut for the farmer – no time wasting going to marts or creameries.

All of that seemed to us a very hard and unsociable life and we said so. They pointed out, however, that between milkings, many farmers played golf or did something with the family and they all agreed that dairy farming was a young man's job. Most of them quit milking in their early fifties.

Shared Milking

It was common to see a situation where the farmer and his wife owned the farm, and the son and his wife owned the cows, did the milking and the income was divided between the two families. The Chief Dairy Board Advisor in Taranaki, Don Johnson, accompanied us to some farms.

On one of the farms, the son was explaining that his father owned the farm and he owned the cows and worked the dairy unit. He then added that "Dad reared the calves, for which I pay him and he gives me some good advice, for which I don't pay him." At this point Don Johnson intervened to say "I don't know what it's like in Ireland, but here when a young fellow is twenty, Dad knows nothing, but between that and the age of 30 Dad learns a hell of a lot". Our leader Paddy O'Keeffe replied that's a universal phenomenon.

During the farm walk the father complained to me about the lack of a good water supply. I replied, "given your rainfall here and your soil type, how can there be a shortage of ground water?" "Oh, we can get plenty ground water, but it's hot and has too much sulphur in it" I had forgotten that New Zealand is a very volcanic area.

I noticed that all the poles, carrying electricity to the farms had a strip of tin, about 12 inches in height around the wooden pole approximately 15 ft from the ground. I enquired what the tin strips were for – "to stop the Opossum" he replied. Opossums liked to climb up the poles and if they got to the top, they would get electrocuted, which in turn cut off the electricity to the farm. Luckily we have no opossums in Ireland.

As we travelled by bus I noticed tree ferns about 10-15 ft in height. They were beautiful and I wished they could be grown in Ireland. The following year when on a motoring holiday in the Dingle Peninsula, in Kerry, I drove into a 2nd level school and there, to my surprise, and delight were the beautiful fern trees.

Three years later, after UCC bought Fota Estate, I saw the tree ferns again, amidst a large collection of exotic ferns in the world renowned gardens which were established in the early 19th century by the Smith Barry's, owners of Fota and large tracts of land in Cork and Tipperary.

Heading South

We headed south, towards the famous Ruakura research station, stopping in Hamilton. As I was the only one without wellingtons, and the weather getting worse, I went into a large shoe store to buy some foot gear. The fellow serving enquired where I was from. I told him I was from Cork, Ireland. "I know it well", he said, "my father was in the army barracks in Ballincollig". I shocked him by saying that I was farming the farm where the army kept their horses. "Ryan's farm" he said excitably, and I replied "Yes, but there are no horses there now". The man was literally in tears of emotion and joy. Alas I could not spend enough time for a further chat, as I had to meet the bus at a given time. How I wished that I could have had a grand old chat with him, but our guide was a stickler

for time.

Almost everywhere we stopped overnight, Irish people came to greet us. At a reception one evening a man named Grealish introduced himself. Grealish is a rare name in Ireland and very much associated with Galway. I enquired where he was from and he told me "Would you believe I carried the bag for your father when he was partridge shooting in Coshla" I said. "You are a Raftery?" he said "my father referred to Mrs. Raftery, the widow with ten children, am I right?" "You are indeed", I said. We celebrated with a few drinks and recollections of times past.

We spent a wonderful day in the dairy research centre in Ruakura listening to and discussing with the researchers, every aspect from cow breeding, feeding, milking and health. New Zealanders work and speak as they play rugby – no "beating about the bush" – blunt straightforward answers. It was a motivating experience. We visited a number of processing plants too and the sheer scale of the operations, compared to our little co-ops at home was daunting.

Holiday Weekend

On a holiday weekend we were invited to stay in some farm homes, all of Irish extraction and all rugby followers. The consensus of those I spoke to was that Mike Gibson from Belfast was their favourite visiting player. Wales was the top rugby nation in the Northern hemisphere, at that time – but Gibson was the favourite amongst those I had spoken with. It seemed to me that everybody in New Zealand including the nuns I spoke with followed rugby. On the holiday Monday my host farmer had a sick cow. I accompanied him to see the animal out in the field – she was unable to rise. I suggested calling the vet, but he just mulled over it saying the vets fee would be double normal fee on a holiday "a, I'll take a chance on her" he said and just left her there – rather callous I felt, but that was their matter of fact way of looking at things. He took me to visit neighbours O'Neill's, two brothers, running a very large unit. One of the men looked unwell and he told me what happened. He got Weil's Disease ie. Leptospirosis, which is usually transmitted by rats. Handling material where rates had urinated, can be very risky, particularly if you have cuts on the hands. I had been aware of farmers getting it in Ireland, from handling potatoes where rates had been feeding. It can be lethal. Mr. O'Neill assured me that he was wishing to die; such was his mental and physical suffering. "How did the brother manage all the work, when you were ill?" I enquired. "The two wives and my mother" he replied. "Where was your mother from?" I enquired". "I will ask her" he said. He called his mother, a healthy looking old lady who welcomed me. "Where in Ireland did you come from Mom?" "A little town called Athenry" she said. I could scarcely believe it. I told her I came from near Athenry, but it meant very little to her. Obviously she was very young when the whole family emigrated first to England and then to New Zealand, but strangely, she did not have the real New Zealand accent. Truly, the Irish are everywhere.

Sheep Farming

While dairying is the principal farming in the North Island there is a very significant sheep production and processing industry. Sheep are produced on the hills and mountains and New Zealand is a very hilly and mountainous country, a country primarily of volcanic origin. Some of these volcanoes are still active. The lava and ash thrown up over millions of years have left behind fertile hillsides, where millions of sheep live, breed and thrive. Flocks of sheep are in the thousands and for management and production three things are imperative – dogs, light aircraft (for fertilising) and motorbikes for transporting the dogs as well as the farmer.

In the sheep-producing areas they had two types of dogs which they referred to as "round up dogs" and "hunt away dogs".

The farmer had a platform on the rear of the motorbike carrying both type of dogs. These bikes with two dogs were running through towns and villages, and the dogs seemingly loving it.

The roundup dog (typical Border Collie) was sent off to the high ground where he would round up the sheep and bring them down for treatment, dosing for worms, spraying against blowfly etc. When the job was done the Collie dog was tied up and the "hunt away dog" was let loose. His was the easier task – he just barked and barked to drive the sheep away again. This dog, whatever his breed, had lots of hair down over his face and eyes, and clearly enjoyed barking sending the sheep away into the hills again. Work done the dogs jumped up on the platform of the bike, one looking each way as the farmer drove along through towns and villages, with the dogs enjoying the ride. It was an everyday experience in sheep country.

We were taken to a sheep slaughter house and there we saw the hunt away dog again. The dog was running back and forth on the backs of the crowded pens of sheep urging them into narrow passages. At the end of each passage, a man with a knife just caught the sheep under the chin and slit the animal's throat. The animal was then suspended on a conveyor for skinning, gutting etc. - all at a pace which was bewildering.

We were told that the US Department of Agriculture suspended imports of New Zealand lamb meat fearing that processing at such a pace could not be hygienic. However, having checked the process thoroughly, and having found the hygiene ok, imports from New Zealand resumed.

Fertilising the hills was done with specially designed light aircraft. These planes had a great wing span so they could carry heavy loads at low levels and low speeds. It was a very dangerous occupation for the pilots, who were very well paid, but mortality rates were rather high. The empty plane on landing was reloaded, and in less than two minutes they were in the air again. As New Zealand, like Ireland, gets lots of windy days, they must make the most of the few calm days for aerial fertilisation.

Meeting the Irish Again

Snow capped Mount Egmont, the tallest volcanic cone in North Island, at 2,500 meters or over 7000 ft., is really beautiful. It is now a protected National Park. We stayed in a town adjacent to the park, New Plymouth. As we entered the town, I saw little spurts of steam from grass gardens and suddenly we all noted the smell of sulphur – we were certainly in volcanic territory.

Maori Settlement

We were taken to a traditional Maori settlement where we saw their traditional homes and items of worship. I saw fish being cooked by immersing the fish at the end of a long rod, into a boiling mud pool and on withdrawal was perfectly cooked. All this, of course, was for the benefit of tourists and the general body of Maories were integrated very successfully into society. Their contribution to the All Blacks rugby team is now very evident.

We stayed in a hotel which was owned and managed by a Maori and his wife and family. Following our evening meal, the Irish citizens for miles around came in to meet us. One of them approached me to tell me he was a graduate of the Dairy Science Faculty in UCC. His name was Sam Whyte, an Ulster unionist. As the only Dairy Science Faculty in Ireland is in Cork, he came to Cork, graduated in Dairy Science, worked for a time in Sligo, but left Ireland when the troubles started. The owner of the hotel and his wife and family decided to entertain us with songs and music. His voice was the nearest I had ever heard to that of Paul Robeson, singing "Old Man River". It was wonderful entertainment. Clearly he had a sense of humour and knowledge of Irish affairs, when he invited some of the Irish men to sing, saying 1st

prize was a holiday for one week in Belfast and 2nd prize a holiday for two weeks in Belfast.

There were no volunteers, so I stood up and announced that Mr. Sam Whyte would sing The Sash. Two or three of my colleagues physically lifted Sam up to the stage. Assisted by music he sang The Sash and got a standing ovation. As he returned to his seat, beside me, I could see the emotion on his face. He collapsed into the seat and putting his arm around me he sobbed like a child whilst saying "Why can't we do that at home Tom?" "That day will come, perhaps not in our time Sam, but it will come, when people realise that peace is better for both sides than conflict". If I ever get back to New Zealand, I will re-visit New Plymouth, to recall that wonderful experience. We finished our trip in Wellington, the capital city, in the very south of the North Island of New Zealand.

Heading Home

We boarded a New Zealand aircraft for our first step on the road home. The flight was to Sydney, approximately 1600 miles journey. Before boarding, I purchased a book on the Third Reich. The fact that a very educated and civilised population followed a man Hitler, who was a failure at everything he undertook, was something I tried to understand. I was so engrossed in the book that I did not notice that the plane had turned back. Then came the announcement from the pilot, "we are returning to Auckland, as we have received a message that there is a bomb on board".

To my amazement I did not panic, believing it was a sick joke. However, the crew were visibly nervous – some having beads of sweat on their foreheads. This was at a time when hijackings and bombs on planes were more common than today.

I just kept reading, but soon we were instructed on how to evacuate the plane in Auckland. Evacuation was very orderly, but due to the fact that I was at a window seat in the centre of the plane, I was last out. When I got onto the tarmac, I turned to take a photograph of the plane, when suddenly I got caught by the scruff of the neck and told to get the hell out of the place. They were taking this in an extremely serious manner. The plane was parked out at the end of the runway and we got busses back to the terminal – so now we were in Auckland, when we should be in Sydney.

The behaviour of passengers, Irish and otherwise, when we got into the building was interesting. Many people ran to the toilets. One passenger, not Irish, just bought a bottle of whiskey and a pack of cards. He sat o the floor drinking the whiskey and playing some card game, talking to himself. Jerome Buttimer, the oldest member of our tour, with his usual sense of humour, walked past where we were assembled, just saying "I felt sorry for all of you, young fellows".

After several hours we were called and led out to an area some distance from the building, where there was a long line of suitcases and bags. Each passenger had to identify his or her bags and open them for inspection. After this, the bags were put on a trailer to be reloaded onto the plane again and sometime later we were called to board the same plane, to fly to Sydney. In all, we lost six hours and people were very tired and tetchy when we got to Sydney in the dark.

Later we learned why they were so extremely worried by the phone call claiming there was a bomb on board. It transpired that our tour leader, Paddy O'Keeffe, was interviewed by Radio New Zealand and during the interview he was asked about the activities of the IRA. Paddy, in his usual manner was very forthright and critical of the IRA and the campaign of violence that IRA was conducting. By chance, an IRA sympathiser heard the broadcast. Following the broadcast, he got details of the Irish group, numbers, names, numbers of men and women etc., and date of departure and destination. With all this information to hand, he phoned New Zealand Airways, his

story about the bomb was very credible, so the airline staff acted very properly in the circumstances. On arriving in Sydney, we were tired and some people very angry. Needless to say we did not stay out late that evening.

Next day, we were free to do whatever we wished. I was determined to take a boat trip in the beautiful harbour. It was an excellent trip and we got a wonderful view of the world renowned Sydney Opera House, and of course, the very impressive Harbour Bridge.

Mr. David Bird, a farmer from Great Island, near Cobh and myself were walking back in the City. David was a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin. In a crowded street he accidently bumped into an older man coming the other way. They laughed at each other saying, "What are you doing here?" He was Professor Webb from Trinity, author of the book "Webb's Flora", and he had lectured David as a student a little over ten years earlier.

I was sorry that we did not have more time in Sydney. Next day we set out on the next leg home, heading for Hong Kong in very heavy rain. As the rain receded, I looked down from my window seat at a reddish barren, desert-like country. Hour after hour that was all we could see, until we got to the Northern part, which was totally different – trees, swamps, lakes and then the South China Sea.

The pilot announced we were coming into Hong Kong Airport. The plane was flying so close to buildings it was really scary. Since then, Hong Kong has built a new airport, to cater for larger planes and more traffic.

Hong Kong

As we descended steps within the airport, the locals were offering to make a suit, or coat or shirt, in just a few hours. They would measure people on the sport, transfer the measurement to the sweat-shops and it would be ready for collection in a matter of hours.

Outside the terminal I saw the row of rickshaws, with young men touting for business. We did not avail of the service as there was a bus waiting for us. The city was crammed with cars, buses, cyclists and of course the rickshaws. Everybody, everywhere I looked, was working. They reminded me of ants. Even on the footpaths they were making, mending, painting etc. From my hotel room I saw gardens on rooftops and balconies and then I saw a high rise building being built. To my amazement, they were not using steel scaffolding. They were using bamboo scaffolding. I was told that the workers did not trust steel. They always used bamboo. Subsequently an Engineer told me that the bamboo was stronger and more flexible than steel scaffolding, and of course bamboo was cheaper and unlike steel, it did not rust.

Walking down town I noticed a very small shop doing great business, selling hand-held digital computers. This was the first time I had seen such a silent and instant calculator. My secretary in UCC was using a Swedish Facit, which was slow and noisy, working out milk yields per cow etc. Naturally, I purchased one of these for my her. The man was selling these little digital computers with one hand, working the abacus with the other hand, and dealing with customers. I wished I could have filmed the operation.

After returning to the hotel, I demonstrated my purchase to the Irish group and they were so impressed I had to lead a group of them back to the little shop, where he was still selling and still calculating on the abacus. They all purchased and for the remainder of the evening they were playing with these little "new toys". Creamery Managers at home would in future have to be on their toes, as these lads could in an instant, work out the correct prices they should be getting for their milk.

The following day was Sunday and in those days people went to church on Sunday

without fail. As the majority of the group were Catholics, it was unanimously agreed that we would go to a Catholic Church. The nearest Catholic Church was run by Dominican Priests. During the Mass the Irish group were noticed by an Irish Priest. Immediately after Mass he invited the group into a reception area where we got teas, coffees and biscuits. Several more Irish Priests arrived and they were wondering how we came to be in Hong Kong and of course, they were hungry for news from home.

As a group from Ireland, we were more interested in seeing Hong Kong and doing a bit of shopping. At that time, we in Ireland, were getting a huge variety of goods with "Made in Hong Kong" labels on the box or item in the box. I enquired from a priest where would be the best store for our group to go to. The priests had a little discussion and then to our amazement they recommended the Chinese Communist Store. We were very surprised, so I asked, "Why the Communist Store?", to which they replied "it's the most honest store. Other stores seeing a group like you might take advantage and overcharge, but the communist store is not overly interested in profits".

They called a few taxies for us and one priest accompanied us to help with the language etc. Subsequently, I bought some post-cards with beautiful photos of Hong Kong to send back to people in New Zealand. As I was writing on the cards I noticed the following in small print on the top of the card "Made and Printed by John Hind & Co., Dublin, Ireland". I got a good kick out of that, a nice turn about from the "Made in Hong Kong" I was used to.

Following our shopping, some of us took a ferry across the harbour, where there was a viewing area on high ground. As the ferry navigated its way, I had noticed that quite a number of small boats were also homes for families. From the high ground, we could see huge number of boats of various kinds, including the Chinese Junks, which we see on the post cards.

Later that evening Jerome Buttimer and I went out for a meal. Given the number of fishing boats I reckoned there should be fresh fish so that's what I decided to order. The waiter invited me to follow him. Outside there was a big fish tank, so he just handed me a fish net with a long handle and invited me to select the fish I wanted, which I did. You could hardly get fresher than that, and it truly tasted fresh and excellent.

Next Step on our Journey Home

We boarded a plane later that evening. I had a sleep, but I heard the announcement that we were landing in Bangkok. Strangely, we were allowed to get out and walk around on the tarmac. I could feel the heat from the tarmac creeping up inside the legs of my pants. Fortunately, the stop was short and we took off again. A few hours later the plane landed in the dark in New Delhi. We were allowed off and into the airport building, while the plane was re-fuelled. People were asleep on seats, on the floor, in corridors, with no evidence of luggage. It seemed like they just came in for somewhere to sleep. Again, the heat and humidity at about 2am was, for Irish people, rather uncomfortable.

Following boarding, in just a few hours, we could see flat land and two great rivers which I guessed were the Tigris and the Euphrates. In school I loved the subject geography – national capitals, great rivers, great lakes, high mountains and deserts etc., fascinated me. Unfortunately capital city names in Asia and Africa in particular keep changing. Next stop was Beirut, where we were scheduled to stay overnight. Coming into Beirut Airport I could see the famous Cedar of Lebanon trees on the rather barren hillsides.

At Beirut Airport there were armed soldiers everywhere – it was scary. Some people planned to go to Damascus in the afternoon, and I agreed to go, but unfortunately I fell into a deep sleep and the bus

was gone when I woke up, so I just walked around the centre of the city. Again, I noticed armed people, police and soldiers at every corner. There was something unnerving about it all.

Shortly after getting back to Ireland, I heard radio reports about civil war in the Lebanon. Arriving home was great. The children were, of course, excited and I had a few presents for them. Bredhe was relieved to have me home safe and, as she was very interested in clothes, I had the perfect present for her - a silk garment with the label "Made in Hong Kong" on the back.

Back to College Again

The reliable Sean had everything in order. On meeting the President I was very surprised that he wanted to hear a lot about New Zealand, especially its dairying. It was clear to me that he had lots of facts and figures from his days as Director of the Central Statistics Office. He seemed to have a special interest in that country. Perhaps that was why he had no objection to my going away for a month from UCC.

Requests for talks on New Zealand farming flowed in. Strangely, the first invitation was from Tom Sproule, a Dairy Farmer from Castlefinn, Co. Donegal. Tom had been on the tour. I spoke with him on the phone and suggested he could do the lecture himself, but he would not hear of that, saying that he was not accustomed to public speaking and adding "you had a camera to recall everything". It was impossible to refuse Tom's pleas. I agreed, and a date was set.

The first farmer to contact me when I arrived in Cork was Ted O'Leary who had a fine farm in Ballinrea, very near Cork City. He invited me to give a lecture to a farm group near Carrigaline, but I was to have tea in his house on the way to the lecture hall. I found his farm house and his wife served up the finest lamb chop I had ever tasted. One a side table I noticed the Financial Times – this was no ordinary farmer, I thought to myself. I commented on the Financial Times and Ted said he had some shares and he studied the stock markets results regularly.

In addition to a good herd of cows, he had a pig enterprise. He showed me the detailed figures he had, going back twenty years on the costs of producing a pig. Ted never missed a lecture, so I got the bright idea of inviting Ted to travel to Donegal with me. He jumped at the idea and I was delighted to have the company and to share the driving. Tom Sproule met us for a meal and brought us to our accommodation for a brief rest. The hall was full for the lecture and the questions came quickly afterwards. Because of the strong Donegal accent, Tom Sproule had to explain a few questions. Overall, it was very successful and Tom thanked me and introduced Ted O'Leary as a very successful dairy and pig farmer in Cork.

Following the lecture, I was approached by a very distinguished looking man whose accent was definitely not local. He was Major Chance, a renowned breeder of Aberdeen Angus beef cattle. I had been aware of the Major for two reasons – firstly I regularly saw his Aberdeen Angus bulls in the Spring Show in Ballsbridge and secondly, and much more importantly, it was the Chance family of medical renown in Dublin, who took in a young Noel Brown, who had lost his entire family from Tuberculosis and educated him in Trinity College Dublin. Subsequently Noel was elected to Dail Eireann and appointed Minister for Health. Dr. Brown with Dr. Deeney of the Department of Health, together with the aid of the new antibiotics, finished the scourge of TB which wiped out so many young and old, including all of Noel Brown's family. The Chance family never got sufficient credit either from, Noel Brown in particular, or the nation in general, for their generosity.

The Major invited Ted and myself to visit him the following morning and we were delighted to accept. As you might expect, he had a fine residence and farmyard. We

were treated to morning tea and coffee by a lady servant, dressed as servants were in the great houses at that time. We were then given a tour of the very fine old farmyard, built in stone of course, and he proudly showed us his prize animals and the various prizes, rosettes and silver cups he had accumulated over the years.

Were it not for the very long journey ahead of us, I would have relished spending more time with him. I never met him again before he died. Significantly, he seemed to be on very good terms with the local farmers, as we could see after the lecture the previous evening. Ted and myself set out on the long journey back to Cork, made all the longer by the awfully bad road which existed then.

I got many more invitations, many of which I could not accept, but I got one from the Cattle Mart in Athenry, where my brother was Chairman, which I could not very well refuse. There was a fine crowd and there amongst them, of all people, was my old mentor Donal Taheny, who would scarcely know a sheep from a goat, but it was great to meet him again.

Fortunately, I had images of matters other than agriculture in my slide projector – scenes of Sydney Harbour, air scenes of many parts of New Zealand and Hong Kong etc. Donal, as ever, had to have his humorous comment, suggesting I would make a good tourist guide.

With a day job and a young family, plus my wife's declining health, I had to refuse many invitations to speak, but Paddy O'Keeffe, our guide in New Zealand and Editor of the Irish Farmers Journal, wrote regularly about New Zealand.

I did however also accept an invitation to speak at the I.C.O.S. annual conference, where all the Chairmen and Managers of Co-Ops gathered for their AGM and conference. I accepted willingly, as I had become increasingly annoyed by the reluctance to change or the very slow pace of change compared to Co-ops in Holland and Denmark, two other small countries in Europe, who had higher costs of milk production than we had, and higher costs of animal housing.

In my view, they were just too complacent and reluctant to change. The following is what I said: "Whenever I think of people being complacent or satisfied with present success, I am always reminded of that little poem which Samuel Walter Foss wrote in 1895 called the "Calf Path". This little poem has a moral to it about what happens if managers do not embrace or accept change and keep change in their thinking. Here it is –

The Calf Path

One day thru the primeval wood
A calf walked home, as good calves should;
But made a trail, all bent askew,
A crooked trail, as all calves do.
Since then 300 years have fled,
And I infer the calf is dead.
But still, he left behind his trail
And thereby hangs my mortal tale.

The trail was taken up next day
By a lone dog that passed that way.
And then a wise bell weathered sheep
Persued the trail, o'er vale and steep,
And drew the flocks behind him too
As good bellwether always do.
And from that day, o'er hill and glade
Thru those old woods, a path was made.

And many men wound in and out,
And dodged and turned and bent about,
And uttered words of righteous wrath
Because 'twas such a crooked path.
But still they followed, do not laugh
The first migrations of that calf.
And thru the winding woods they stalked
Because he wobbled when he walked.

This forest path became a lane
That bent, and turned, and turned again.
This crooked lane became a road
Where many a poor horse with his load
Toiled on beneath the burning sun

And travelled some three miles in one.
And thus a century and half
They trod the footsteps of that calf
The years passed on in swiftness fleet,
The road became a village street.
An this, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare.

And soon the central street was this
Of a renowned metropolis.
And men, two centuries and a half
Trod the footsteps of that calf.
Each day a 100 thousand route
Followed the zigzag calf about
And o'er his crooked journey went
The traffic of a continent.

A 100 thousand men were led
By one calf, near three centuries dead
They followed still his crooked way
And lost 100 years per day.
For this such reverence is lent
To well-established precedent.

A moral lesson this might teach
Where I ordained, and called to preach.
For men are prone to go it blind
Along the calf paths of the mind.
And work away from sun to sun
To do what other men have done.
They follow in the beaten track,
And out, and in and forth, and back,
And still their devious course pursue
To keep the paths that other do.

They keep the paths a sacred groove
Along which all their lives they move.
But how the wise old wood gods laugh
Who saw that first primeval calf
Ah, many things this tale might teach
But I am not ordained to preach".

Following the lecture there was a mixed reaction. It was very clear thas the older members were not happy. On the other hand the younger people were delighted. A young man from Armagh, who was a guest of I.C.O.S. congratulated me and invited me to give the same lecture in his local Co-op in Armagh, where he was chairman. It was a difficult decision to make and I gave no commitment.

When I got home, I discussed it with Bredhe. She was all for it, as she was very anxious to see Armagh, especially the Cathedral there, the seat of our only Cardinal – Head of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Her interest in her religion was very genuine, while mine is rather lukewarm.

The man from Armagh wrote to me inviting me to give a lecture, similar to that which I gave at the ICOS conference in Dublin. I replied in the affirmative, giving him dates which suited me. He replied selecting one of the dates, some weeks ahead to give time to advertise the meeting.

Armagh Visit

We drove up – a pleasant journey until we reached the border crossing, where there was a heavy presence of armed soldiers and armed police. They were polite, examined the car and looked into the boot and just waved us on. Arriving in Armagh City there was great police and military activity. I enquired, in the hotel where we were staying, what was going on and the girl on the reception just casually said there has been a bomb threat, as calmly as just saying good day.

We checked in and enquired about the Cathedral. We got a little map of the city and the Cathedral was very close to the hotel. Following a cup of tea and biscuits, we set forth for the Cathedral, which looked very impressive, but alas it was locked, probably because of the "troubles" or the bomb scare that day. After a short walk, we returned to the hotel and I just felt so sorry for the people who had to live in such an environment every day. My car was, of course, parked out the rear of the hotel on the advice of the hotel staff. A Cork number plate might invite some trouble, we were told.

The lecture went well. Again, the Northern accent was a little difficult to follow. On our journey up, I could see that the farm houses and farmyards looked more prosperous than in the South, and that was reflected in their questions and comments.

Bull Beef

When I was studying on the continent, I noticed that all the male cattle were fed and fattened indoors, as bulls. There was conclusive proof that bulls converted food more efficiently than castrates (bullocks) and that the carcasses from bulls had less fat than the carcasses of bullocks.

They housed animals were fed on concentrated foods, such as cereal grains, sugar beet pulp, brewers grains etc., plus a limited amount of cut grass.

In Ireland beef cattle were fed solely on grazed grass for approximately eight months of the year and conserved grass, such as hay or grass silage plus a limited amount of expensive concentrate feeds.

When we got the extra land in Ballincollig, I discussed with Sean the possibility of producing bull beef outdoors and containing them by means of a good electric fence system. "What happens if the electricity fails?" said Sean "We can have a battery backup system" I replied. Sean agreed and we put thirty weanling bulls out to grass. They thrived and there was no problem. In their second year they, as expected, became very aggressive. I gave strict instructions that nobody was to go into the paddocks on foot to those animals. If it was necessary to go in, do so, on a tractor, I instructed.

They thrived very well and an arrangement was made with Irish Meat Packers, to analyse the carcasses for lean to fat ratio etc. Goulding Fertilizers agreed to fund the extra costs through the good offices of Michael Walker, who had been one of my students, in Dublin.

The animals were ready in late November and a trucking company was hired to transport them to Irish Meat Packers, not far from Lyons Estate. The truck and trailer arrived at the farm in Ballincollig on 7th December. The driver took one look at these menacing animals and just said "I will not transport them". "Why?" I asked, to which he replied "There is a frost warning and if the truck and trailer runs into icy roads, what do I do? If they were bullocks, I could turn them into a field, but these animals could not be let loose".

The unforeseen had stopped us in our tracks. Subsequently, when the frosts were over, they were taken and the carcasses analysed. The results were as expected, but farmers were reluctant to take the risks of rearing bulls outdoors. Instead, they opted for using growth homes on bullocks, which gave much the same results in terms of weight gain and lean to fat as could be got from fattening bulls, without the risks. Some years later the EU banned the use of hormones, not on scientific grounds, but for political reasons.

A booklet was printed about the bull beef experiment in UCC. The front cover of the booklet showed the rear ends of a group of these animals, because, as most people know, the rear end is where most of the lean meat comes from.

A short time later, at a reception in UCC, I was approached by the Professor of Anatomy, Professor McConnell, who was rather sarcastic about agriculture, and taking the cigarette holder from his lips said "Raftery, your cows are very rude". "Why?", I replied. "Turning their posteriors to the camera" he said. Obviously he had seen the booklet. "I am surprised at you Professor", I said "a Professor of anatomy – these were bulls, not cows". He just turned and walked away – no military salute this time. That was the last time I met him, as he retired shortly afterwards from College.

Chapter 10 – Courts and hearings

My Days in Court

On a September afternoon, two days after the All-Ireland Hurling Final in 1973, I was on my way to the farm in Ballinacranna, when an old truck coming towards me hit the front wing of my car, despite the fact that I pulled into the grass margin on the left. I stopped and got out to examine the damage. The truck driver stopped the truck, opened the door and looked back at me. I signalled to him to come back. He got out, a big heavy man, and began to tuck up his pants and as he approached he said "I don't know who was wrong here young fellow" (nice compliment to a forty year old). "Well" I said, "it will be easy to find that out", "And how would you find out?" "We can call the Garda station" I said. "Aha, now young man there is no need for guards – we are decent men" I wrote a note and asked him to sign it. "What's that for" he said. "It's a note admitting that you damaged my car" "no way, no way" he said.

In the meantime a woman from a house nearby came to see what happened. "Have you a phone Mrs" I enquired. She said "Yes". "Can I use it to call the Garda Station"? "Certainly" she answered. He suddenly changed his mind and signed the statement, giving the name Cronin, Cronin's Garage, Sluggera Cross, Cork. I thanked the woman and went on my way to the farm. The farm staff were curious to know what happened to my new car, so I told them and showed them the note, admitting responsibility for the damage. They just smiled and somehow I sensed that they knew something about this driver.

On my way home I diverted to Sluggera Cross. I enquired for Mr. Cronin. "He is down there under a truck". I could see two boots protruding from under the truck. "Are you Mr. Cronin"? I asked. "Yes" he said "What can I do for you"? "Had you a truck drawing straw near Killmallock today"? I asked. "No, he replied, but Johnny had the loan of a truck. Do you want some straw"? He asked. I replied "No I don't want straw, but Johnny hit my car with your truck, and he signed your name to this Statement". He was on his feet in double quick time. "The bastard, I'll kill him", "and where is your car?" I led him out to see the car, and he was greatly relieved that the damage was not too bad.

The case went to court, which was held in the School House in Kilfinane and the school was pretty full, mainly with older people. The first case before the Judge was a man charged with doing £160 worth of damage to a car parked outside a schoolhouse, while a woman went in to collect her children.

It transpired that the culprit had a vehicle with defective brakes and steering. He had no job, no drivers licence and no insurance. Under pressure from the Judge he agreed, reluctantly, to contribute £1.00 per week towards the repair of the car. I could scarcely believe my ears, hearing that he got off so lightly.

Next case would have made a great piece for an amateur piece of drama. What happened was that a farmer in his car and the postman in a van stopped for a chat, thereby blocking a narrow road, on a frosty morning. Suddenly another vehicle slammed into the post-van from the rear. The first witness was a farmer, a big heavy man, in a crombie coat and carrying his hat in his hand. The Judge indicated where he should sit. He sat with his left elbow on his knee and his hand under his chin. The hat was parked on the other knee.

Judge: "You're Mr. --" after some consideration, he agreed that indeed he was.

Judge: "On the morning of the accident what town were you going to?"

Farmer: "I wasn't going to town at all; I was only going to the Cross of Black".

Judge: "The Cross of Black means nothing to me, what town were you faced to-

wards?"

Farmer: "Ah, that's different"

Judge: *Getting angry* "what town were you faced towards?"

Farmer: "Well, as the crow flies, I was faced towards Charleville, but the road was going to Kilmallock".

Judge: *Very sarcastically* – "Thank you, you may stand down".

Farmer: "I am sitting down".

Judge: "You may go now".

Farmer: "Goodbye now Sir", as he stands and puts his hat on and walked out.

I pitied the poor Judge. Next up was the sergeant of the Gardai. The sergeant put on his spectacles and took out his notebook.

Judge: "Could I have your Report?"

Sergeant – reading from his notebook said "On the morning of ---I took the vehicle in question into custody. The steering was defective. There was no brakes on the front wheels and just one brake on the back wheels. It had three bald tyres" etc.

Judge: "Stop" The Sergeant took off the spectacles and put the notebook back in his pocket.

Judge: "Would it be true to say that the only part of this vehicle which was functioning normally was the engine?"

Sergeant – puts back the spectacles again and opening his notebook said "no, you're Honour".

Judge: "What was wrong with the engine?"

Sergeant: "It had no throttle"

Judge: "How could he operate the vehicle without a throttle?"

Sergeant: "He had a wire coming up through the floor"

Judge: *Throwing his eyes up to heaven* said "Thank you".

The driver of the van was called. He admitted that he had no job, no insurance, no driver's licence.

Judge: "where did you get the vehicle?"

Driver – *mumbled something*

Judge "speak up"

Driver – *mumbled something again*

Judge: "If you don't speak up I will have you up for contempt of Court".

Driver: "In the Limerick Dump, Sir".

Now while of this was going on, I was having a few laughs. Those around me were annoyed. They were hanging on every word. Apparently this was part of their entertainment each month.

My case came up, but there was no defence offered, so the Judge awarded full expenses including my expense for travelling to the Court in Kilfinane from Cork. The Defendant never paid up, so I went to the County Sheriff's Office in Cork, where I was assured they would get the compensation for me. Thirty six years later, I still have not got it, but I certainly got good entertainment in the Court, and I left that Court very conscious of how dangerous driving on Irish roads had become.

Perhaps it spared me from some bad accident subsequently, as I certainly drove more carefully afterwards.

My Days in the High Court

Mr. Jerry Murphy (of Shell Chemicals) and I were examining a site, for an experiment related to the elimination of Liver Fluke, which was a big problem in low lying land, at that time. Suddenly, I saw one of our

farm workers from Bishopstown coming in a very distressed state. "There has been a terrible accident in the farmyard" Prof., he said. "A young boy has been killed". I left Jerry immediately and got back to the farmyard, as quickly as possible. There were police and an ambulance just moving off. Sean was calmly explaining to police what happened.

He had engaged a handyman to make some adjustments to a feed mixer. The man put his teenage son into the machine to hold something for him. Now there was a notice in letters at least three inches high to the effect – "*Switch off the power before opening this machine*". Regrettably, he ignored the notice and the boy accidently hit a pressure pad switch inside and the feed mixer started in the process, killed the boy before the power was switched off.

I phoned Bredhe to tell her the awful news. As it happened, my mother was there for a few days holiday and to my amazement she suggested that Bredhe should have a strong drink of whiskey or brandy ready for me when I would get home. Mother was very quiet when I got home. I was glad of the drink and Bredhe came out for a long walk with me. It was a bad night for all of us, and it was unfortunate that it happened during Mother's few days in Cork, for a short holiday.

The following morning, I contacted Ambrose O'Mullane, Ireland's best known agricultural photographer at the time and engaged him to photograph the scene. The matter went to the High Court in Dublin. Michael Kelleher, College Secretary and myself went to the Four Courts. There were very few people there. The parents of the boy were there. My heart went out to the boy's mother who was sobbing. When the case was called, Council for the family asked for a brief adjournment. When court resumed there was an announcement that the case against UCC was being dropped. Apparently, when the Council for the family saw the photographs, he advised the family to drop the case. I was of course relieved, but the sight of that mother grieving haunted me for some time.

A few years later, I was informed that the boy's father got killed in some kind of accident with a bull in a cattle crush. Some families do suffer and as Shakespeare said "When troubles come, they come not single-handed".

My next visit to the High Court had a happier outcome. It happened as follows. I was contacted by a former student, John Craige, who was now Director of Gurteen Agricultural College in Co. Tipperary. The College was run by the Protestant Church of Ireland, just as a number of Agricultural Colleges were run by the Catholic Church, such as Rathfarnham, Warrenstown and Pallaskenry.

The grievance of these Colleges was that they were subject to paying rates whereas the State Colleges were exempt from rates. This was news to me, and I felt strongly that this was very unfair. John asked if I would help him make a case to get equal treatment with the State Colleges. I travelled to Gurteen, discussed the matter at length with John. He had a legal firm in Birr to represent him, but they had no technical experience. I agreed to help on the basis that I would get my travel and subsistence allowance. That was all agreed – no fee. I made my submission which was given over the legal firm. A date was fixed for the High Court in Dublin and I was there on time. The Department of Agriculture was also represented. The legal people, for both the Department of Agriculture and Gurteen College were to the fore. The presiding Judge was Catherine McGuiness

When I was called, I made a short Statement. Then to my great surprise the Judge started to discuss agricultural matters with me, displaying knowledge of agriculture which left everybody in the Courtroom amazed. She then said "I am going on too long, does anybody wish to ask Professor Raftery anything?" There was no response. She thanked me and I stood down.

"The matter is now closed and I will give my Judgement shortly".

Her Judgement was quite clear; the independent Colleges must be treated in the same manner as the State Colleges i.e., no rates.

John Craige was very pleased and so was I. An injustice had been rectified. I sent details of my travelling costs (at Civil Servant rates) to John Craige. Months went by, but no money was forthcoming. I reluctantly phoned John to complain about not being refunded for my travelling expenses. John was very embarrassed. He had passed on my expenses claim to the legal firm in Birr and he was surprised to hear I had not been reimbursed. John contacted the Solicitors in Birr who were already paid for their service and after months of wrangling with John, they rather reluctantly sent me the expenses, which were overdue.

At the hearing in the High Court I met a former student, Nick Bielenberg, a very tall man who qualified in Agriculture and had become a private consultant in agricultural matters, especially in land valuation. Travelling alone in my car, sometime later I heard the most amazing interview with a Mrs. Christabel Bielenberg who had just published her memoir, "The Past is Myself". I purchased the book and it was a fascinating and wonderful story. She was from an English aristocratic family and she married a German Lawyer by the name of Peter Bielenberg. He was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler, which was led by an Army Officer by the name of Von Staufenberg. Just a few years later I met a German, in the European Parliament, by the name of Von Staufenberg. Following a brief conversation, I asked if he was related to the man who tried to Assassinate Hitler and he just replied, I am his son.

Christabel was Nick Bielinberg's mother and her husband and herself decided to come to live in Ireland. They bought a farm on the Wicklow/Carlow border. She recalled in her book, going into the Agricultural Advisory Office in Tullow, looking for technical advice about their new farm. She described how this nice young man, by the name of Stephen Cullinane, came out and took soil samples for analysis, and on the basis of analysis, recommended the use of ground limestone.

Stephen Cullinane was a young Agricultural Graduate, from Castlegar in Co. Galway. He was the founding member of the first secretary of Macra Na Feirme (the Young Farmers Association) and the Irish Farmers Journal. He died very young, possibly from Tuberculosis. I never met him. Years later, I learned he was a marriage relation of our family. Although he died young, he left a great legacy of a more efficient agricultural industry to the Irish economy.

Zinc Smelter in Little Island

There was a proposal to put a zinc smelter in Little Island in the early seventies and the County Council was the authority to approve or reject this proposal.

A delegation of staff and County Councillors went to see the zinc smelter at Odda in Norway. Strangely, they omitted to bring any agricultural or horticultural experts with them. They returned happy to put the zinc smelter on Little Island, which was just west of Fota Island in Cork Harbour. John Dring, a prominent and very vocal dairy farmer, who I got to know, shortly after arriving in Cork, phoned me and asked for a meeting. I met John and a couple of other concerned farmers – concerned about any adverse effects this smelter might have on their families and their farms. I told them that I knew nothing about emissions from any kind of smelter.

John was a very forthright and intelligent man. He suggested that I go to Odda to examine the impact of the smelter at Odda. It was an inappropriate time for me, as I had just returned with a group of my students from Holland and I had some family health problems at home. John suggested

he could get a man to accompany me, who could do the driving in Norway. I reluctantly agreed. Before setting out, I phoned the Ministry of Agriculture in Oslo for a meeting, and they agreed to a meeting.

We arrived on a Sunday afternoon on a flight from Heathrow. We were booked into a hotel near the Ministry of Agriculture. There was a great excitement in the bar. I looked in – standing room only. The 1970 World Cup final in soccer was on. It was the first time I saw Pele, Jarzino, Tostao and so many more brilliant soccer players on the television. Brazil won, in what many soccer followers would rate as the best exhibition of soccer ever seen in a World Cup final. I had never been a soccer follower, but one did not need to be an expert on soccer, to appreciate the fluency and skill of these athletes.

We met the personnel from the ministry of Agriculture in the morning. The first thing they pointed out was there was no agriculture at Odda – there was some horticulture, mainly strawberries, plumbs and apples. They arranged for me to meet the Horticultural expert in the Odda region, which was very helpful. From Oslow we flew to Bergin, a famous fishing port, so we took the opportunity to visit the fish market and that was a sight to behold, with many kinds of fish that I had never seen before.

My colleague hired a car and we had quite a long way to drive along the edges of Fjords, looking down hundreds of feet to the water. To make matters worse, I had little confidence in his driving. Truly, I was getting sorry for having come here. Eventually, I saw huge plumes of smoke and steam and shortly we arrived in Odda to meet the Horticultural expert. He spoke perfect English. Our first visit was to the smelter plant, which was very interesting, but dirty and smelly. Smelting consumed lots of electricity, which was produced locally in all the waterfalls from the high mountains – cheap electricity. On to the fruit farms, where he showed me the distorted leaves on the plum trees, caused by the fallout from the smelter. He detailed the damage to the producers' income etc.

Suddenly, I got the idea of inviting this man to Ireland, but he was not too enthusiastic about that. We left Odda with disturbing evidence of the damage being caused, including photographs of distorted plants and distorted fruit.

I met John Dring and members of the Irish Farmers Association. They were alarmed at the idea of putting such a factory in one of the most important farming areas in Ireland. John had news for me. A Public Hearing on the subject was to be held in spring of the following year, and John suggested we must get that man to Cork to give evidence a Public Hearing.

Meantime, I still wished to get into Fota. Now I had an extra reason as I wished to see how close the proposed smelter site in Little Island was to the famous gardens in Fota. I knew that Professor O'Rourke of the Zoology Department in UCC was studying some of the wildlife in the protected environment in Fota and I asked if he could get me into Fota. "I am going there tomorrow and you are welcome to come" he said.

On the following day, a beautiful spring day, he brought me to Fota. He took me to the gardens where I saw shrubs and trees that I had never seen before. The sights and smells and the largest trees I had ever seen – it was all breath taking.

"I want to see Little Island from the nearest point of Fota", I said. So he drove me to the railway station and clearly the proposed site for the smelter was not very far from Fota. The thought of having a zinc smelter, such as the one at Odda, so near to the wonderful gardens in Fota appalled me.

As we were viewing the scene, Professor O'Rourke spotted Mrs. Bell's car approaching. "Here she comes" said Professor O'Rourke. "Now you don't say anything, I

will do the talking". She was a small woman and Professor O'Rourke was a big round man. He greeted her with a hand shake and then said "this is my colleague Professor Raftery". She looked at me, but continued talking to Professor O'Rourke. Finally she said "Is he your eldest boy?" looking at me. It was difficult to refrain from laughing –clearly her hearing as well as her judgement was very defective. I never saw the woman again and she died in 1974.

The Public Hearing

The Public Hearing was scheduled for spring – April, I believe. I contacted the Horticultural expert from Odda and after some persuasion, he agreed to come to give evidence. I met him, at what was then a very small airport in Cork. His first comments referred to how green and flat the country he could see from the air was. As we drove towards the city he was delighted with the beauty of the flowering gorse bushes – an invasive plant which Irish farmers abhorred. Clearly he had no gorse in the mountains at Odda.

The Hearing was like a court hearing, where people were cross-examined before a Chairman. The man from Odda was called and he gave the facts about the damage to the fruit trees and showing photos of distorted leaves to a stunned audience. I was the last to be called and like everybody giving evidence, I had to give my qualifications and experience. There was just one question which was as follows "Would I not agree that the sulphur emissions would benefit the growth of farm crops?" I replied that sulphur is an essential element in plant growth, in very small quantities, but aerial application would be very detrimental. "Why?" asked the Chairman. I replied that sulphur combined with moisture in the atmosphere could fall as sulphuric acid (H_2SO_4) which would damage not only crops, but could also be corrosive for cars, steel roofs etc. "You may stand down" said the chairman and the meeting is now closed".

John Dring was elated and convinced that permission would not be granted and he was right. Some days afterwards, the announcement was made that planning permission for the zinc smelter was refused. Without John Dring, it was unlikely that I would be involved, but without the trip to Odda, and above all the evidence given by the expert Horticulturalist from Odda, planning would almost certainly have been given, as there was a very great need for industry and jobs in Cork at that time, following the closure of many of the older out-dated plants.

The gardens in Fota, had a narrow escape.

The following day the heading on the Cork Examiner was "Professor who owns three farms, gives evidence". In giving details of my experience, I said I had experience of farming in the Albert College, Lyons Estate and UCC Farms. I phoned the Examiner and asked for the Reporter, who was at the oral hearing. He came on and I asked why my evidence was distorted and I read out the heading on the Examiner. "My God", he said, "you never said that" "Will you please have the matter corrected?" I asked. He assured me he would, but no correction ever appeared, or no apology ever offered.

Chapter 11 - Fota

Fota once more

In 1974, I was elected to the Governing Body of UCC. During my first term as Governor, Fota Island was put up for sale. I suggested that the College should buy Fota and sell the land at Ballincollig. I argued that Fota could be a very valuable teaching resource, not only in agriculture, but also in Botany, Zoology, Geology etc. The President ridiculed the idea and set up a committee to examine whether or not the College should own any farmland.

I was excluded from the committee – a serious mistake by the President. The Academic Staff Association, of which I had been the first Chairman, automatically "took up arms", not so much on my behalf, but as they saw it, if this can happen to one head of a Department, then it could happen to every Head. It was a dreadful mistake on his part, and it seriously damaged his standing.

In my innocence, I went to both Local Authorities, City and Council, to plead with them to help save Fota, as the farmers were now lobbying to have the estate divided by the Land Commission, to provide more land for the local small farmers. The councils were not interested. I went to the Land Commission in Dublin, to be greeted by the same man who helped me with Lyons Estate. "So it's you again" he said. "I know the situation, and you can rest easy, it would be a shame to break it up and given the layout, I cannot see how it could be divided in a manner that would satisfy everybody".

Well, that was that. We took a planned motoring holiday in England and we stayed a few days with my brother-in-law Rev. Fr. Bill Bennett. A phone call came through from the Department of Agriculture, in Dublin, looking for Professor Raftery. I went to the phone and was told the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Mark Clinton, T.D., wants to speak to you. Mark came on the phone to ask was I serious about purchasing Fota? I said we were. "Well in that case, I will get the Minister for Finance, Richie Ryan, to send a Letter of Comfort to your Secretary in UCC, and the best of luck to you Tom".

I had no idea what a "Letter of Comfort" was, but it sounded good and then I wondered how in the world he had located me. To have gone to such trouble to find me was clear evidence that he did not wish to see Fota broken up.

This was the same Mark Clinton T.D., who helped me (behind the scenes), when I was striving to acquire Lyons Estate in Newcastle, Co. Dublin back in 1962, but this case was different in that he was now the minister for Agriculture, and the Irish Farmers Association, let by T.J. Maher President of the IFA put considerable pressure on the government to have Fota broken up. Some farmers put their livestock into Fota. Mr. Gow, who was Farm Manager in Fota, suggested the cattle should be poisoned, to which I replied, "The cattle are innocent, so they should not be made victims". He cooled down and the cattle were taken away when the owners realised that this land grab was very unpopular, even amongst the farming community.

Purchase of Fota

The 1973 County Development Plan designated Fota and the surrounding estuary as one of high amenity. Foras Forbatha subsequently made a very detailed report under the headings Location, Geology, Mudflats around the Island, Climate, Vegetation, Zoology, Ornithology, Buildings, Roads and Paths, Services and Scenic View, also adding "Fota is unique in having a train station on the island, at which all trains between Cork and Cobh stop. A total of 29 trains pass through Fota each day".

RTE contacted me for an interview on the matter, so I went to Dublin and was interviewed by a Mr. Gallagher. T.J. Maher was also interviewed. A remark I made about freedom of free sale and the right to private

ownership struck a chord with the farming community so the feedback to IFA headquarters was overwhelmingly against the breaking up of Fota.

The local branch of the IRA, in Carrigtwohill, sent a message to me, that they would burn the farmyard in Ballincranna, if I persisted in the purchase of Fota. It worried me that they knew of my interest in the dairy farm in Co. Limerick. I immediately contacted the insurance company and after the insurance premium was adjusted, I sent back a reply "Burn it if you wish, it's well insured". News of the threat got into the public domain; it appalled the general public and more than likely deterred potential buyers.

At a special meeting of the Governing Body of UCC, members voted by a big majority (18 for, 2 against) to purchase Fota, and an offer of £400,000 was accepted by the Trustees of Fota. There was just one bid. Perhaps the IRA threats were a factor in that. The purchase made national as well as local news.

In my presentation to the Governing Body of UCC, I had stressed the potential for teaching and research in botany, zoology and geology, as well as teaching and research in milk production. Ironically, the first faculty to send large numbers of students to Fota, after the purchase, was the Civil Engineering Faculty to practice surveying. Each year in spring, they descended like a small army and worked diligently to get their various projects completed. I never heard any complaints from Fota staff about these students. They just worked hard to get their projects completed on time.

The following day, I had a phone call from the leader of the local farmers, a Mr. John Ahern. "Congratulations Tom, we'll be good neighbours" he said. John was true to his word – he was not just a good neighbour, he was an excellent neighbour, who did a few little jobs for me in Fota, in later years, for which he refused to take any payments. He was also an excellent farmer. Following the opening of Fota Wildlife Park, in 1983, John called me saying that he regularly had 2nd class vegetables, and if they were of any use for the new animals, we could have them free of charge.

As Fota developed, John's adjacent land became very valuable, which as much more beneficial for him than any parcel of farmland that he had hoped to get, if Fota was divided up amongst the farmers. A group of very fine houses were built on John's land adjacent to Fota. The name of the development was Coish Fota. No doubt it made John a very rich man, which gave me great satisfaction.

After the Purchase

Following the purchase of Fota, the land near Ballincollig was put up for sale. I had expected it to make in excess of £300,000, which the President thought was too optimistic. In fact it fetched £450,000 and to-day every square foot of it is developed and built on. Based on that price, the railway line which I got for nothing from CIE now realised almost £20,000. With Fota, there was no need for the land in Bishopstown which was surplus to the requirements for sports. It was sold for a new dog track, also a soccer pitch for ESB staff and some for commercial use. I was not involved in these deals, but clearly the College got a very significant overall sum, hugely in excess of the price of Fota. All of this happened over a period of years, during which Sean and I were preparing Fota for access of the general public to the gardens, and building facilities for a 200 cow dairy herd.

Fota Gardens

I let it be known to the press that the gardens would be opened to the public, following some preparatory work. Following this announcement, I had a visit from a Mr. McAree, a Tree Specialist from some Government Department, probably the Department of Lands. Mr. McAree stood at the back of Fota House, scanning the trees

with binoculars. "A considerable number of trees will have to be felled, before you can admit the public" he said. I was shocked. There were already a large number of trees felled after the January storm of 1971. "Why do they need to be felled?" I enquired. "Take a look at the tops" he said, handing me the binoculars. The tops were bare and dead-like. "Come up to see the bases" he said. We went up to see the bases and sure enough there was a fungal type growth, evidence that the timber was decaying. I was gutted. He then offered to mark every tree which was to be felled, adding that a felling licence would follow.

The front avenue up to Fota House was just a gravel surface, which would be unsuitable for the expected extra traffic. I had it tarred and chipped and almost immediately there was a letter of complaint to the President from a man called Richard Wood. The President just passed on the letter to me. I had no idea who Richard Wood was, and just ignored it. No time was lost in removing the windblown trees and felling the condemned ones.

We had friends from Dublin to celebrate our daughter's confirmation. In the afternoon we took them for a walk in the gardens, where there were wind-blown trees on the ground and newly felled condemned trees. As we were walking I noted a Garda car going up the front avenue. Shortly afterwards a Garda approached me delivering a summons for felling trees without a licence. I explained the background to our guests, and the man, who was at one time in the police, said there was an informer. All this felling was behind rows of trees within high walls.

The Felling Licence subsequently arrived to the Garda Station in Cobh and that was the last we heard of that. The clearing up and getting ready for the public access, took approximately two years.

Records and Labelling

As I was going through some documents in the coach yard one day, I picked up a book which had neat handwriting. On examining it, I found it was the records of planting in Fota, going back to 1815. It had recorded country of origin, date of planting and rates of growth. A very valuable document was found by sheer chance. It was fashionable amongst great Landlords, to employ men to go to the newly discovered lands to bring back species which were not known in Europe. The De Barrys of Fota were amongst the most successful in bringing in and successfully growing exotic trees and shrubs and the soil and climate in Fota proved to be very suitable for growing material from all corners of the world. The word Fota itself came from two Irish words Fód Te which means warm soil. I got in touch with the Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Mr. Aidan Brady. Aidan was from Roscommon and he was just a name to me, albeit a name that will go down in the annals of the GAA. He played in goal for Roscommon footballers, and during the Connaught final, Aidan jumped up to stop the ball going over the bar. He failed to catch the ball, but he caught the crossbar and it broke in two pieces. The match had to be stopped, while somebody got a replacement bar and had it secured to the posts. All of this took nearly 30 minutes, leaving players and supporters alike, rather annoyed.

Aidan journeyed to Fota. Sean O'Donovan knew him from their time together as students in UCD. He was overjoyed with what he saw in Fota and he took the records, at my request, for safekeeping and to make a copy of them for Sean.

Professor Roberts, the Professor Botany offered some help. The help came in the form of a woman I recognised. She was a Maureen O'Connor, from Galway and she was a demonstrator in the Botany Department in UCG, when I studied there. Now she was Mrs. Morrish, a mother of two sets of triplets and living on the Blackrock Road in Cork.

Sean and Maureen, with occasional help from Aidan, set out to identify all the trees

and shrubs and have them labelled – with the name, country of origin, and date of planting on the labels. Between removing fallen trees and felling trees and labelling, it was more than two years before we could admit the public. Before announcing the opening, I contacted Taisce for help in supervising the opening to the public. Taisce put a team of people in place with labels on their lapels. Also notices advising the public against cutting plant material were prominently displayed. The numbers were huge. Cars were parked in the parkland in front of Fota House.

Towards evening, I saw a woman with cuttings from two beautiful shrubs. I knew her. She was the wife of one of our staff in UCC. One of the Taisce personnel intercepted her and took the cuttings from her.

For a time there were some problems. Some people, who knew what they wanted after seeing the gardens, came in after hours and dug up the shrub and took it away. Fortunately, this has ceased. So what was closed to the public for hundreds of years, is now a wonderful amenity, with one of the most diverse range of trees and shrubs to be found anywhere in the world, on one site, open to the general public, free of charge 365 days per year.

In 1987, when there was a prospect of a sale of part of Fota, a report by Taisce in December of that year, was issued. The following is a direct extract from that report:

> Dec 1987
>
> *An Taisce expresses its concern about the future of the arboretum at Fota, Co. Cork and its anxiety about the proposed developments affecting the house and especially the surrounding parklands and woodlands which give rise to the character and international reputation of the arboretum.*
>
> *In 1980 the Heritage Gardens Committee of An Taisce declared that Fota was a garden of outstanding historical importance and of international interest in its own right. That designation was recognized by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) which is a constituent committee of UNESCO (United National Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and it linked Fota with other equivalent gardens and demesnes in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, and with similar outstanding properties in Great Britain and Western Europe.*
>
> *The arboretum at Fota is unique in Ireland as it contains one of the richest collections of exotic trees and shrubs in Ireland, the significance of which is greatly enhanced by the fact that planting records survive, documenting the age of many of the individuals. Some of the specimen plants are among the finest of their kind in cultivation in Western Europe. Others represent species that are endangered in their wild habitats, and the entire assembly forms not only a garden of great beauty, but also a treasury of botanical and horticultural excellence.*
>
> *Through its period as custodian of the arboretum, the Department of Dairy Husbandry, University College, Cork has done outstanding work in maintaining the basic fabric of the garden, in enhancing the value of the plant collections, and in restoring areas in the arboretum that had become neglected, overgrown and derelict. Many new species and cultivars have been planted in the arboretum and surrounding parklands by the College, thus continuing the tradition and practice of the original owners of the estate. An Taisce unreservedly congratulates the authorities of UCC for the care and attention given to the arboretum, for that surely has enriched the Fota estate and ensured that the arboretum is still of out-*

standing international significance.

The report was an huge endorsement of all the work which had been done by so many in Fota since we had purchased the island.

Establishing A dairy Herd in Fota

When talking to farmers and students about the milk yields of cows on the demonstration farm in Ballincollig, they invariably came back to saying we had animals of superior genetic merit. It was nonsense and the acquisition of Fota gave me an ideal way of proving that it was management rather than breeding that was giving good milk yields.

Immediately after purchasing Fota, I contacted Cork Marts and requested them to get 200 Friesian type heifer calves. The calves were sourced from Kerry to Wexford and Cork to Clare. Some calves were all black which indicated there was no Friesian blood in them, so they were culled out. As farmers tended to keep heifer calves from their best cows, it would be fair to say that what we got was below the average genetic merit.

They all calved at two years or less. During these two years we had to erect housing and a milking parlour. This gave an opportunity for some innovation.

Sean and myself went to visit the farm buildings unit at the North of Scotland Agricultural College, which was noted for its innovation in farm buildings.

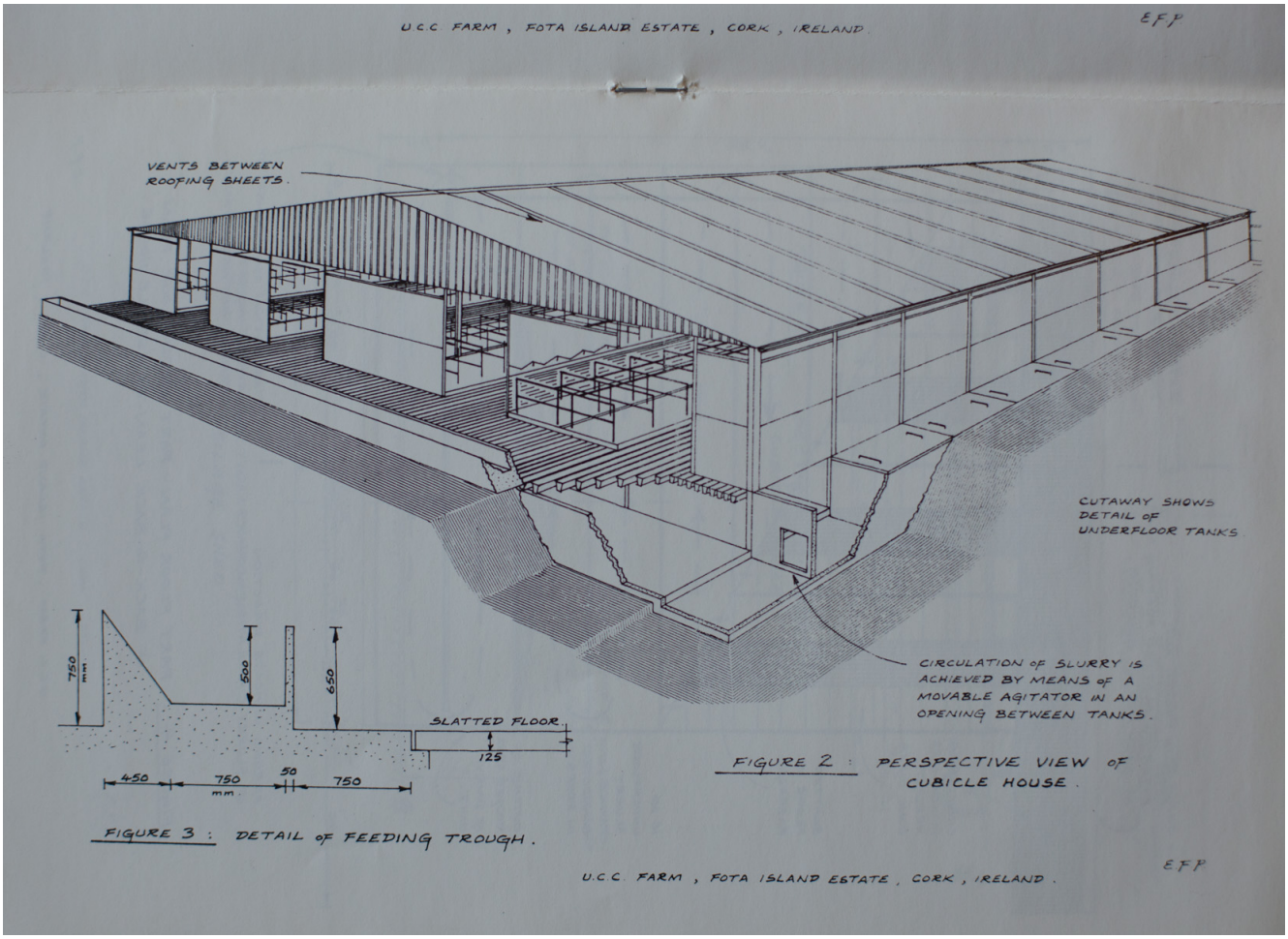
We got one good idea, which was the design of the feeding trough. Otherwise their buildings looked too expensive, but that was in part, due to their very severe winters.

From Scotland, we went to Holland where again the buildings were designed for very cold winters, but we did get one great idea from the way they stored and mixed the slurry (a mixture of faeces and urine). At home slurry was stored in a variety of ways prior to spreading on the land when the soils dried up in spring. Concrete tanks were used, but these were very dangerous, if uncovered, where children or farmyard animals had access to them. As anything which fell in, could not possibly survive unless help was immediately at hand. It was a veritable quicksand. Furthermore, unless roofed, which would be expensive, as much as 20 inches of rain or more would fall into the slurry. This would increase the task of emptying it, or worse still could lead to an overflow, which could end up polluting waterways.

The Dutch had developed a system of storing and agitating (to prevent solids settling at the bottom) the slurry under the cow beds. This I recognised was the best solution especially for Fota where we had two limiting factors – namely costs and intrusion on the beautiful landscape. About the same time I heard of the precast concrete panels and slats which were being made by Noel C. Duggan Concrete Ltd. I travelled to meet Noel C. and the Concrete Manager a Mr. Healy. The discussion was very productive in terms of ideas and cost saving as Noel C. Was very conscious of the publicity value of getting this project on the University Farm in Fota.

Help and advice was provided, free by Mr. P. Tuite and A. Kavanagh, Architects of the Agricultural Research Institute. Now I knew what I wanted to do, but I was unable to draw it on paper. Through Professor Quinlan, I got a post-graduate student from the faculty of Engineering and he did all the drawings for a small fee. His name was E.F. Punch from Limerick, where his father had a Consulting Engineering practice. I believe he subsequently got a good job in the USA, following a post-graduate degree there.

With the technical details agreed and submitted to Noel C. Duggan, the project was completed in record time and at very reasonable cost. All the units arrived on lorries and buildings were put together somewhat like a big mechano set, including a silage storage pit. Everything in concrete



was pre-cast, apart from concrete floors.

A 20 unit milking machine was installed, with accommodation for 40 cows in the parlour. The milk went through a fresh water cooler unit, 1500 gallon stainless steel tank which had a refrigeration unit attached. The milk was collected daily. The whole unit was ready for the 200 first calving heifers. Such was the interest in this break from the traditional methods of housing and slurry handling, that I got a little booklet printed with all the detailed drawings by Mr. Punch and a comment from Mr. Ronald Harrison of the North of Scotland, College of Agriculture, who came over to see for himself. He wrote a forward for the booklet as follows:

Dairy Cow Unit at Fota Island

This unit is the outcome of bold and clear thinking in scale with the size of the enterprise. Building economy has been possible by taking advantage of climatic conditions favourable to outdoor feeding on an ad-lib system that is both space and labour saving; while also allowing flexibility in the grouping of cows.

Summer milking routine permits the cubicle area to be by-passed altogether which reduces post milking chores. The slatting or slabbing of the entire floor of the building is not only labour saving and adaptable, but accepts with realism the need to conserve slurry – the major by-product from the dairy herd and in a form which is readily mixed to provide a valuable and consistent fertiliser for application to the land under the most favourable conditions.

The principles achieved by this forward-looking project are applicable to a unit of any size and the building elements lend themselves to commercial fabrication.

I would wish to congratulate University College, Cork upon the initiave shown by the Department of Dairy

Husbandry.

It is also of significance that development on this scale has been carried out the minimum of intrusion upon such a beautiful estate.

Amongst the many many farmers who arrived, were two brothers, who let it be known that they were very disappointed to see such a cheap building on the University farm. A few years later, I was informed that they had gone out of dairy farming, having sunk too much money into buildings at a time when milk quotas were introduced.

I remember a regular saying my mother had which was something like "Fools and money are rare bed fellows". There was another advantage of this type of pre-fabricated building, which I could not have foreseen.

Calving and Milking

Almost 200 in-calf heifers, with approximately 20 older cows from the Bishopstown farm were introduced to the new buildings October – November 1977. The older cows became leaders into the cubicles and into the milking parlour. Calving started pre-Christmas and thankfully, with so many first-calvers, things went better than expected. Milking again the older cows took the lead into the milking parlour. By the end of February, calving was completed. The milkers complained that 20 units was too much to handle, with so many first time calvers this was understandable. Within 18 months they expressed a wish to have extra units, but alas because of the original design of the whole complex, it would have been virtually impossible or at least excessively expensive to do so.

The average yield of milk with the first lactation animals was in excess of 800 gallons. The variation in yields was truly remarkable, from as little as 400 gals to in excess of 1200 gals. Naturally the poor yielders were culled out by using semen from the best bulls at A1 stations, the herd improved year on year until the yields reached 1800 gallons average 10 years later under the management and guidance of Sean and a new recruit J.J. Kett, who was a young and very enthusiastic agricultural graduate from a good dairy farm in Waterford.

Visitors to the Dairy Unit

Visitors to see the cows and particularly the novel farms of buildings, increased year on year. The figures for 1983, the year before I took leave of absence to serve in the European Parliament, were as follows:

Visitors to Fota Farm 1983

Date	**Name of Group**	**Approx No.**
Jan 10	Richard Commerford, Kilkenny and friends	4
Jan 12	Bandon Grammar School	45
Jan 13	EEC Course Skibbereen (ASOT)	42
Feb 1	Group of Creamery Managers and Advisory Staff (Golden Vale Co-Op Creamery)	50
Feb 16	4th yr. Dairy Science Students; 2nd, 3rd, 4th yr Nutrition Students (Dr. F. Cremin)	25
Feb 25	Group of Farmers, Midleton (ACOT)	60
Feb 29	Dairy Science 11 (degree) Class	23

March 3	Farm Apprenticeship Board	60
March 3	Pat Mulvihill and Commercial Farmers from England	5
March 8	Group from Kerry Co-Op	4
Apr 21	Group of farmers visiting NET and Fota Farm	50
May 2	De La Salle, Skibbereen	45
May 9	Group from RTE	12
May 10	Dip. Dairy Science 11 class, Di9p Meat Sc.Class	28
May 10	Bandon and Cork City Vocational School Group	20
May 17	Group of Avonmore Farmers	55
May 18	East Cork Farm Home Management Course (Mrs. Tait)	20
May 19	Drishane Convent School (Group 1)	45
May 25	Drishane Convent School (Group 2)	40
June 21	Governing Body of UCC	30
July 1	Waterford ACOT Group	50
July 14	Michael O'Brien, Farmer (Dairy Buildings)	1
July 21	Irish Farm buildings	85
July 28	North Cork Creamery Managers and Staff	35
July 29	Group of Saudi Arabian Students attending Course at Ballyhaise Agric. College	30
Aug 4	Group from Ministry of Agric in Northern Italy	11
Aug 5	Students from Zimbabwe attending course in Dairy and Food Eng. Dept., UCC	12
Aug 16	Angus Fanning and two others (Irish Independent)	3
Aug 17	Saudi Arabian Agric. Advisors (ACOT)	17
Aug 18	Golden Vale Farmers	50
Aug 24	John O'Sullivan, Farmer (Dairy Buildings)	1
Aug 26	Michael O'Mahony, Farmer (Dairy Buildings)	1
Aug 27	Group of 5 commercial farmers (Dairy Buildings)	5
Sept 5	Myles Rath, UCD, Lecturer in Dairying	1
Sept 6	Kildare Friesan Breeders Assoc	55
Sept 7	Newmarket Farmers Group	40
Sept 13	Carbery Macra Na Feirme	55
Sept 15	Group from ACOT, Cashel (T.Ryan)	60
Sept 29	Farm Inheritance Group (ACOT) Fermoy	50
Oct 11	Farmers from Thurles Creamery area	125
Oct 13	Bandon Co-Op Group	35
Oct 14	Avonmore Advisors	4
Oct 19	NET Group (agents) – Also visited gardens	4
Nov 16	Pat Fleming, ACOT, Midleton and Group	40
Nov 17	EEC Dairy Class, Bandon	1
Dec 2	ACOT Fermoy, Farmers	50
Dec 14	Farmers Group, Omagh	25
Dec 15	ACOT Class, Midleton	50
	Total	1,559

Milk quotas were introduced in 1985 and farmers were free to sell or buy quotas. When the farm was sold to LET in 1989, the milk quota was worth £353,158 plus a temporary suspension of £4,781 per annum until 1992.

The sale of the cows, plus the milk quota sale and the temporary suspension brought in a total considerably in excess of what the College paid for the whole estate in 1975 and it set new targets for dairy farmers. Now there are farmers in the vicinity of Cork, with cows yielding in excess of 2000 gallons per lactation. Our top dairy farmers can now equal the best in the world. I dropped into see the cows being sold, where I met a cousin from Tuam, John Tighe. John and his brother had 400 cows on two farms in Tuam as well as a pasteurising and bottling plant, and a small cheese plant. I enquired if he was buying – "no" he replied, "they are too expensive for me". It was all too emotional for me so I departed – the end of an era had come, a good era.

Roughly twenty five miles away, in the research station at Moorepark, great research was being carried out on grassland productivity, milking machines, winter feeding, pit production etc. Almost all of the scientific staff were former colleagues and former students of mine. Each year they held what was called "Open Days", where dairy farmers and dairy processors were invited to attend. People hungry for knowledge came in their thousands, year after year. Dairying became the most progressive and dynamic sector of Irish Agriculture and dairy products were up with the biggest sector of our agricultural exports – no going back to importing butter which we were doing occasionally, in the early fifties – when I was consuming Danish butter in Ballyfin, and the research goes on in Moorepark with a new generation of young scientists – many of them young women and all better qualified than my generation.

Wildlife Park

Sometime in early 1979, as I was speaking to UCC's Professor of Zoology, Maura Mulcahy, who was a daughter of the former Professor McHenry, Maura casually told me that Dublin Zoo would celebrate its 150th anniversary by putting a Wildlife Park somewhere adjacent to Dublin, such as Wicklow or Kildare.

I immediately phoned the Director of Dublin Zoo, Terry Murphy and asked for an appointment to see him. He agreed and I travelled by train to Dublin and walked from Kingsbridge Station to the zoo. The Secretary took me to the Director's Office, which was in a nice old house and overlooked part of the zoo. Tea and Biscuits were delivered and then I suggested that the proposed new Wildlife Park should be put in the second City of the State, in Fota. He had never heard of Fota, so I gave him a bit of history of this famous Estate. He reluctantly agreed to raise the issue at the next Council meeting of the zoo. I contacted Victor Craigie, whom I knew through their milk bottling plant and he was enthusiastic, especially when I suggested that UCC, under certain circumstances, would make the land available free on a long-term lease.

The Directors of the Zoo agreed to send a delegation to examine the proposed site and in the group was Professor John Carroll, former President of the Zoological Society and former Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture in UCD – the man who heard about the purchase of Lyons on the 6pm TV news. My heart sank, but as we walked through the proposed site, he came to talk to me saying "I am delighted to be back here Tom". "Do you know Fota?" I enquired. "I thought you knew", he said "I was born in Fota, grew up in Fota and went to school in Fota – my father was the Farm Manager here". Suddenly I knew I had an ally, rather than as I had feared, an opponent. Now I had to break the news to President Tadhg, who thought it was a great idea. Tadhg and myself were invited to Dublin and a broad outline of the agreement was reached and a press release issued. There was widespread joy in Cork, a city which had lost too much of its old industry. And with it, a lot of its pride. The Cork Examiner had a front page piece in the Examiner (popularly known as de paper) with an overall aerial photo of Fota headed, "Island of the Wild and Free".

Now the real work had to begin – to raise

Aerial photo of Fota Island with Wildlife Park area circled in red

money to prepare the site and secure the animals, and to design the layout of the park.

The site I selected within the park I chose, for two main reasons:

1. There was a railway station, with a twin track between Cork and Cobh. The conditions under which the Smith Barry Family allowed the track through this little headland of Fota was that a station would be located there, essentially a private station, and that every passenger train must stop in Fota, regardless of whether anybody was getting on or off. There were 29 stops per day. Subsequently, after the park opened, it proved to be an inspired choice.

2. The other reason for putting the Park there was that there was a wetland area, with sea water entering and exiting with the rise and fall of the tides – land that was useless for farming, I could foresee as a haven for waterfowl. Terry Murphy saw the potential it had for forming islands to contain monkeys. Our vision was to have the very minimum amount of fencing. Terry came up with a simple but very effective means of containing the Giraffes, Zebras, Ostrich and Oryx etc., by using a wide band of large stone laid against each other on the ground. This barrier was almost invisible for a few hundred yards and it was very effective. One got the impression that all these species and some other such as the Guanaco, and flightless birds, such as Ostrich, Rhea and Emu were not fenced in. Animals which were regarded as no risk for human s such as Kangaroo, Wallabies, Maras (a Patagonian hare) Ring tailed Lemurs and Capybaras – the world's largest rodent, could roam the whole park.

Everything was fine, except that all this was merely wishful thinking, which would only be achieved if we managed to somehow raise the necessary money.

Fundraising for Fota Wildlife Park

A Fundraising Committee was set up in

Cork, under the Chairmanship of Clayton Love, the best Chairman I ever worked with. Meetings started promptly at 8.30 am on Monday mornings, in the Beamish and Crawford boardroom. Clayton was Chairman of a number of companies, including Beamish and Crawford. Business had to be concluded by 9am – no small talk, just reporting successes and failures since the last meeting.

A Ladies Fundraising Committee, under the Chairmanship of Valerie Whitaker did their own thing. The principal achievement of the Ladies Committee was to raise the profile of the whole project with children's art competitions, fashion shows, house parties and various other events, such as sales of works and children's dancing and singing competitions.

During this time, I started into talks with Bord Failte (Irish Tourist Board) re. a grant to help establish, what I believed would be a great tourist attraction. The Director a Mr. Michael McNulty, also believed in the project and offered to finance the fencing of the area selected up to the sum of £75,000, which was a lot of money then. Next came an offer of £75,000 from Munster and Leinster Bank through Mr. Barry Murphy, who was on or Fund Raising Committee. Both Mr. McNulty and Mr. Barry Murphy are now serving on the Board of Fota Wildlife Park.

The pressure was now on the Bank of Ireland to contribute. I got a call from the Governor of the Bank of Ireland, a Mr. Finley, who was in the Cork area, expressing a wish to see the site, adding "I can only see it early on Saturday morning, about 8.30am". "That's no problem", I replied. I was in Fota just before 8.30am, where I found Sean O'Donovan directing the unloading of heavy machinery. Mr. Finley arrived in his big car. I introduced myself and then introduced Sean, saying he is the Senior Lecturer in my Department. The look of surprise on his face at seeing the Professor and Senior Lecturer working on the project at 8.30am on a Saturday morning, said it all. He could see how committed we were to the project.

He had a brief look at the site in this beautiful estate and left shortly afterwards, thanking me for coming out to meet him. "It was a pleasure" I replied, adding that I had arranged to be there by 9.30am to meet a contractor who was to commence construction of the enclosure fence at 10am. He bid me farewell and wished the project well.

A few days later a cheque in the sum of £75,000 arrived to the Secretary of the Fundraising Committee. No money was forthcoming from the Government of the day.

The people of Cork were simply magnificent. The Trade Unions got their members to make a small contribution from their wages each week and for that they got one free pass per annum into the Park, when it would open. Money came in various other ways – two that I can recall vividly came through my teenage daughter and myself.

The first occurred when the Ladies Committee took a little stand at the Munster Agricultural Society Show in their Show Grounds beside the GAA Stadium. Our daughter Mary was on duty in the little stand, selling tickets for raffle prizes. A man came along and she asked him to buy a ticket – he replied "you don't know me" and she said "I do, you are Mr. Bird". He laughed and walked away. He was actually a Mr. Woulfe, a man who was breeding exotic birds and releasing them, having got permission, into the lake and gardens in the renowned Fota Gardens. He passed back again, still amused at being called Mr. Bird and with a big smile handed her an envelope and off he went. Of course Mary opened the envelope, where she got two shocks; one was a cheque in the sum of £500 and then the embarrassment to see the name was Woulfe, not Bird.

The second happened in a petrol station in Blackpool. One Saturday evening when the garage owner was filling the car petrol

tank he just said "are you still collecting for the Wildlife Park?" I had no idea that he knew who I was and I just replied, "I am". I gave him money for the petrol and when he came back with the change, he handed me a cheque in the sum of £250 for the Park. So the fundraising was going well!

Work in the Park, and the New Car Park

Sean O'Donovan excelled in getting work done in the cheapest possible ways. For taking the mud out of the existing lake and extending the lake as well as creating new islands in the lake, Sean brokered a deal with a sand and gravel contractor, a Mr. John Ellis, to give him two trucks per driver. The idea was that while the driver was taking away the mud to be dumped, the other lorry was parked to be filled by an excavator. Well, that of course, was John Ellis's way of reducing the costs, thereby helping to get the project off the ground. He gave the same concession when the very rudimentary car park was established, by putting a layer of a mix of gravel and soil on top of the existing dry land. Thirty years later, that car park was still functioning, with minimum maintenance now and again, until there was an upgrade and proper surface put on in Spring of 2010.

As the water table in the lake area lowered, some yew trees died, most of these trees which died in prominent areas were cut down and Sean sold the wood to a man from West Cork, a Cabinet Maker. Approximately twenty years later I met him and he showed me some of the yew trees still in his timber store. He also informed me that he had made the new table for Prime Minister Charles Haughey and proudly told me that the yew in the Cabinet table in Government Building in Dublin came from Fota. The few dead yew trees in Fota provided nesting places for birds and climbing ivy to adorn them. A tree expert once told me, that yew never dies. I thought this fanciful, but recently, after more than 30 years of apparently being dead, one of the "dead" yew trees ihas started sprouting again.

A small timber built office building and a little shop was built inside the entrance gate. And at the other end of the Park, where visitors entered from the trains, another little timber built coffee shop with toilets were erected.

Staffing

Two members of Staff from Dublin Zoo were seconded to Fota – the first was Carmel Conroy who was to act as Secretary and Finance Officer. Carmel retired in 2009, roughly 30 years later, but as the work increased, new office and shop staff were taken on.

And for the animal management a Mr. Sean McKeown was seconded from the Zoo. Locals had no knowledge of how to control and care for exotic animals. Animal housing was simple, except for the giraffes – where Noel C. Duggan again provided the concrete panels and the steel work as specified by Terry Murphy of Dublin Zoo. For all the other animals housing was simple and cheap.

New Animals

The first new animals were cheetahs from Namibia, I was told. Sadly they began to get sick and die. The reason for the deaths was that they had no immunity to local cat diseases. After that was established they were vaccinated and of course, their offspring got immunity from their mother's milk.

There was a real danger that if news of these deaths got out, it could seriously damage our fundraising. Somehow the public did not hear about the loss of the cheetahs, but we got maximum publicity out of the successful births. Gradually, other animals like kangaroos, wallabies, monkeys, ostriches and a whole range of waterfowl, plus zebras and giraffes arrived.

Little timber huts were located on the islands for a variety of monkeys. The beautiful ring-tailed lemurs were free to roam everywhere, including outside of the Park,

but they always stayed near to their food source and were all present at feeding time. They dined on fruit, and despite notices not to feed the animals, some people continued to feed the ring-tailed Lemurs, who came begging like children for food. Fruit was their preferred choice, but unfortunately they would also eat biscuits or chocolate, which caused some problems initially, until the message got across to the public that feeding them could harm them. The opening in 1983 was low key, but an Official Opening was planned for later that year.

President Hillery agreed to perform the official opening on the 27th July that year.

Official Opening

Everything was planned down to the minute. The President would arrive by train at 10am and be driven to Fota by his Chauffer in the Presidential Rolls Royce at 10.30 am, where a Boy Scouts guard of honour would meet him.

I got a call in my office in UCC from the staff in Fota to say the President was coming from Lahinch by car and would be arriving in Fota at about 10am. I phoned our President, Professor Carey, who was quiet annoyed. He then said "You go down Tom and arrange coffee in the house and I will get there as soon as possible". I phoned the staff in Fota House, told them about the new time table and to have coffee arranged for President Hillery when he arrived. I got into my car and drove straight to Fota and to my great relief, they had a silver coffee pot, wherever they got it, plus a beautiful set of china laid out on the table and biscuits of all sorts.

Shortly afterwards President Hillary's car drove up – no Guard of Honour – the Boy scouts were only arriving. The President was being introduced all-round by Terry Murphy and the Dublin ladies were out in full style.

Professor Tadhg arrived and of course, they knew each other very well. Suddenly, President Hillery said "where are all these animals?" and Terry Murphy immediately replied, "down this way President" and the two set off down the avenue. Surprised, Tadhg said "Where is all this coffee we are to have?" A Dublin lady just replied "oh the President is not having coffee" Tadhg snapped back "The President does not decide whether I have coffee or not", adding "Come on in Tom, we will have the coffee". We were followed into the house where there was coffee and eats, fit for a king, as they say.

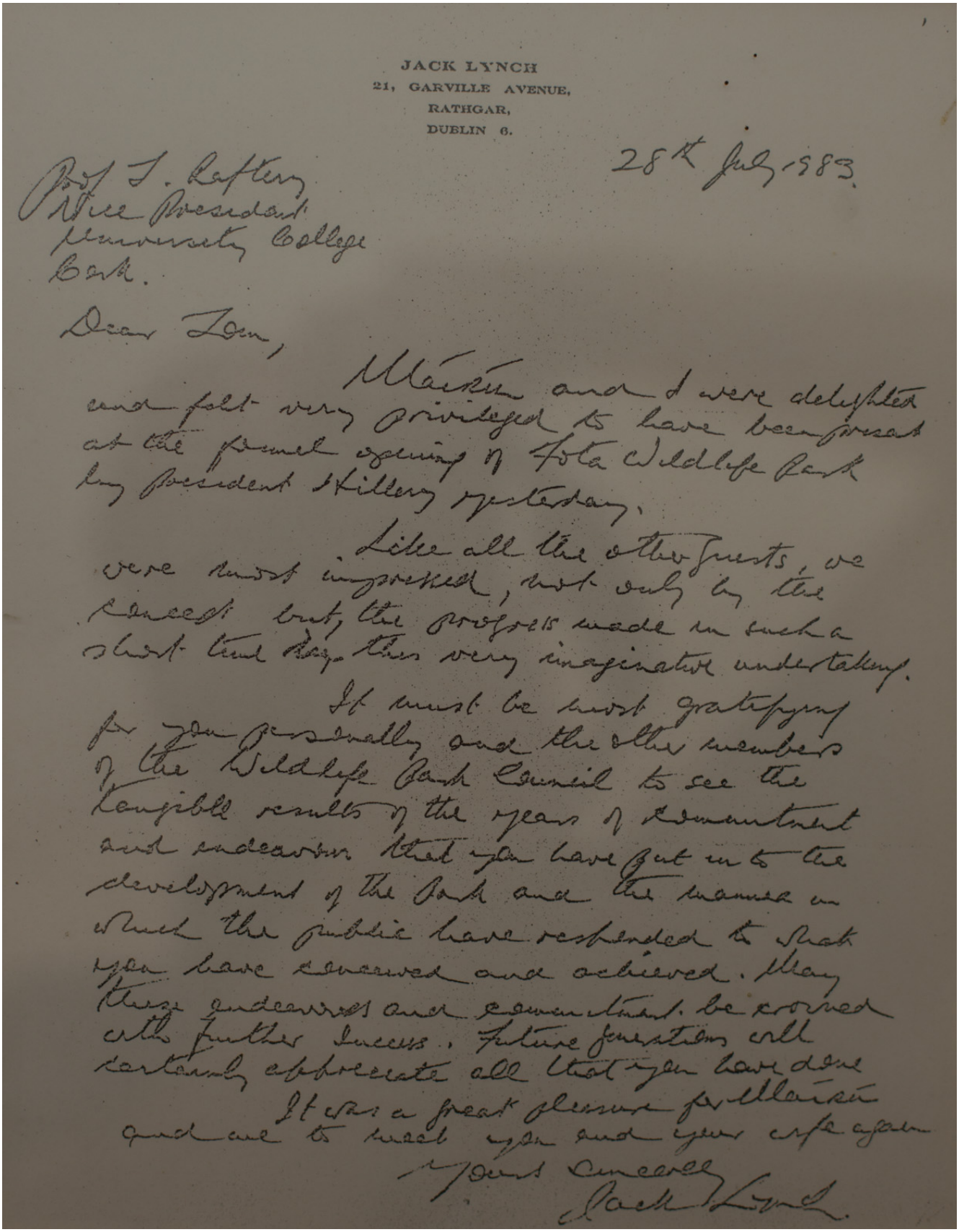
The staff were very disappointed at not meeting the President, but I assured them they would meet him later in the day.

Following coffee, we set off walking to the park. The animals put on a great show, zebras, ostriches and even the giraffe were galloping – to the amazement of the Dublin ladies as the enclosures in Dublin Zoo were too small for such frolicking. When we got to the other end of the park, we found the President and Terry Murphy standing outside the little café drinking coffee from paper mugs. I had a good laugh thinking of the reception we had in the house.

It was a beautiful sunny day and the President was scheduled to visit Collins Barracks after the official opening. However, he was enjoying Fota so much that he decided to cancel the visit to Collins Barracks much to the annoyance of the army who were all prepared for the visit.

For the official opening and unveiling of the plaque there was a roped off area for VIPs, all of whom had an official pass to get into the VIP area.

Former Taoiseach Jack Lynch and his wife Maureen were, of course, inside. Maureen looked out and saw Bredhe and myself outside the barrier. She immediately came out and standing between the two of us just said "if anybody deserves to be in here, you deserve to be, guiding us past the bewildered officer in charge of entry. I thanked her sincerely. When the plaque was unveiled, the President started to



JACK LYNCH
21, GARVILLE AVENUE,
RATHGAR,
DUBLIN 6.

28th July 1983.

Prof T. Lafferty
Vice President
University College
Cork.

Dear Tom,

Mairín and I were delighted and felt very privileged to have been present at the formal opening of Fota Wildlife Park by President Hillery yesterday.

Like all the other guests, we were most impressed, not only by the concept but the progress made in such a short time on this very imaginative undertaking.

It must be most gratifying for you personally and the other members of the Wildlife Park Council to see the tangible results of the years of commitment and endeavour that you have put in to the development of the Park and the manner in which the public have responded to what you have created and achieved. May these endeavours and commitment be crowned with further success. Future generations will certainly appreciate all that you have done.

It was a great pleasure for Mairín and me to meet you and your wife again.

Yours sincerely,
Jack Lynch.

Handwritten letter from Jack Lynch on the opening of Fota Wildlife Park

read a prepared script, which he cut short and bestowed genuine compliments on all involved and he praised the generosity of the Cork people who contributed so generously to this project. We then proceeded to Fota House for a light lunch – some people preferred to dine in the sunshine on the lawn in front of the house, from where some giraffes could be seen ambling across the parkland.

Con Burns, a member of the Governing Body of UCC and headmaster of a school

in Bishopstown, sat apart from people to smoke his pipe of strong tobacco. As I walked towards him I heard him talking to himself saying "Thank Christ I have lived to see the day that this place is back in Irish ownership". I retreated, leaving Con to savour the moment and enjoy his pipe.

Two days later I got a hand written letter from Jack Lynch, thanking me for what I did for Cork. It was the only hand written letter I ever got from a politician, so I framed it and placed it where I have my first and last meal each day, over the kitchen table.

As a very young boy in the forties, I became aware of Jack Lynch, through radio broadcasts relaying his exploits in the playing fields. He won four consecutive All Ireland hurling medals 1941-44. In 1945 he won an All Ireland medal in football and an All Ireland hurling medal again in 1946. This record has not been surpassed and probably never will be in the GAA.

Fianna Fail, De Valera's party, recruited him and he became Taoiseach in 1966 but he resigned as Taoiseach after a very turbulent time in Ireland and in Fianna Fail in 1973.

My late mother, who held an abiding dislike of Fianna Fail, was staying in our house in Cork in the early seventies for a short holiday. During her stay Jack Lynch was speaking on the television, and to my amazement I heard her saying about Jack "God bless him, I believe he is a good man". That was Jack, his charisma transcended narrow party politics - a true gentleman in his time.

Cork 800

1985 was the year in which Cork celebrated the 800th Anniversary of the founding of the city. The 'Cork 800' celebrations brought many distinguished visitors to Fota and the park was particularly honoured by a visit from An Taoiseach, Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald.

On July 27 (Fota's second anniversary) Mayor Dianne Feinstein of San Francisco and two hundred of her citizens, accompanied by the Lord Mayor of Cork, the City Manager and Members of Cork Corporation, visited Fota for the official presentation of six macaws from the city of San Francisco, which has 'twinned' with Cork. Mayor Feinstein also brought a gift of a handsome ceramic pelican for the Chairman, Mr. Brady.

As a momento of her visit to Fota Wildlife Park, Mayor Feinstein received a crystal bowl engraved with the 'Cork 800' symbol, presented by Professor Duke on behalf of the Chairman, who was unable to attend.

Fota Wildlife Park's own contribution to the 'Cork 800' celebrations was a special afternoon of entertainment for the mentally handicapped people of Co. Cork. The total attendance was 750 people from ten centres throughout the country and we received generous sponsorship from many companies for the event.

The sun also shone for an afternoon of music and folk dancing held at the Park as part of the Cobh International Folk Dance Festival. 1985 was the second year this event was held at the Park, and groups from eight countries took part.

The Wildlife Park is now the third most visited tourist venue in Ireland after Guinness Brewery Museum and Dublin Zoo – with between 350,000 to 395,000 visitors per year. It is internationally renowned for the breeding of cheetahs in captivity. The cheetahs are dispatched to zoos and wildlife parks in many countries, including parks in Africa, where cheetahs in the wild are under severe pressure for their survival.

In the year 2009 the Wildlife Park Educational Work was honoured to be selected for the Sandford Award - An independently judged, quality assured assessment of education programmes at heritage sites, museums, archives and collections across the British Isles. This was the first and only

President Mary McAleese on a tour of Fota House

time this prestigious award came to the island of Ireland.

Fota House

Fota House was built originally as a shooting lodge, where family members came for the shooting, fishing and hunting. It was just a two storey simple house, built of rubble stone and plastered smooth on the outside.

John Smith Barry (1793-1837) decided he would make it his permanent home and he hired the Morrison's (Father and Son) best known Architects of their era, to design and build a suitable mansion for a permanent home in Fota.

For reasons of cost, he decided to enlarge the existing shooting lodge. They added two wings, in cut stone, to the existing building and an upper storey also to match the two new wings. The entire exterior was then smooth plastered.

They also added a cut limestone portico at the front door. The internal plaster work and scagliola, hollow plaster work columns resembled much of the work in other Morrison houses, such as Ballyfin in Co. Laois and Lyons House in Co. Kildare and Kilruddery in Co. Wicklow, but on a smaller scale. Subsequently the beautiful long gallery was added and the servants quarters and kitchens. Many years later the Billiard Room was added.

The Royal Cork Yacht Club, reputed to be the first Yacht Club in the world, held their meetings in the Billiard Room. Legend has it that the term Black Balled originated in the Billiard Room in Fota as follows:

On the application for a new membership, any existing member who had an objection to granting membership to this applicant, just rolled a black billiard ball down the billiard table, no reason for the objection was stated.

The parkland in front of Fota House was referred to as the golf field. Subsequently I was informed that it was the 2nd field in Ireland where golf was played. When UCC purchased Fota, in 1975 some of the plaster on the external walls was blistering off. Health and Safety officials made it clear that the public could not be admitted until that was remedied. The College Engineer, Mr. Edwin McCarthy recommended stripping off all the plaster. When the plaster was off, it was discovered that the wings were built in cut stone and the original centre piece was built in rubble stone. For reasons of economy, only the centre piece was re-plastered, which made the appearance rather odd, to say the least.

During this time, in the late seventies, Mr. Richard Wood contacted our President, Professor Carey regarding the use of Fota House. Richard was the man who was critical of everything I was doing, outside of the house and I was very pleased not to be dealing with him. During his dealings with our President he changed his mind so often that the President lost his cool and told him to either sign or "get lost". Richard signed. He employed a well known Architect for refurbishment internally of the house.

The Architect and/or Richard decided that the house should be re-wired and re-plumbed. During this time Sean and myself dropped in to see what was going on. There was noise from the first floor, so we went to where the noise was coming from. To our amazement, we saw two men cutting notches in the joists to facilitate water pipes and electrical wires. I was very surprised and expressed my view that they were weakening the joists and thereby reducing their load bearing capacity.

The reply was vulgar and angry telling me to f..k off, that they knew what they were doing. We retreated, comforted in the knowledge that this was approved by the Architect. Nevertheless, it did not seem to be to be good practice. I regretted afterwards that I did nothing about it, which proved to be a big mistake, as the following report from the OPW proved.

Extract from OPW Report

Drawing Room & Master Bedroom

Part of the Ceiling of the Drawing room has collapsed. The joists supporting the ceiling also carry the floor of the master bedroom, an ante room and the dividing partition walls. The floor joists span 7.25m and are highly stressed under dead load alone with little or no capacity for even light imposed loads, even in areas away from the dividing partitions. This has been exacerbated by the severe notching for the central heating pipes. The deflection exceeds that recommended by the Code of Practice and is in fact nearly twice the permitted value.

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Furnishing the House

Richard did a superb job of decorating and furnishing downstairs and upstairs and then he hung a wonderful selection of his collection of art, which he had assembled over the years. He did not renovate the wonderful old kitchens, or the servants' quarters. Richard was a Director of a number of companies, including the Irish Times Newspaper, so the opening of the house got excellent publicity and the public visited in very large numbers initially.

Amongst the companies he invested in was Bula Mines, with another man Mr. Wymes, a Veterinary Surgeon, who was married to a daughter of Mr. Tom Roche, the founder of Cement Roadstone Holdings, a very large and successful company. Bula Mines was the name given to a company which they hoped to mine on land adjacent to Navan Mines which was operating. Navan Mines challenged the claim, made by Bula Mines, and the court case was the longest High Court case in the history of the state, draining Richard's resources seriously.

In the meantime, some wonderful functions were held in Fota House. Bredhe and I attended a number of them, two of which I will always remember. The first was John O'Connor a renowned pianist and it was a wonderful evening in the beautiful drawing room. The other function I remember clearly was a String Quartet, from the Czech Republic, who played in the Long Gallery. It was a hot summer evening, so the windows were partly open for comfort during the concert. In the large parkland to the front of Fota House roughly 150 young calves were grazing and of course, when they heard the music they came running towards the house to a fence 100 yards away, curious to know what was going on. Sadly for the musicians, the calves were now getting more notice from the audience than the musicians, who from where they were playing could not see the calves. I felt so sorry for the wonderful quartet, whose audience seemed more interested in calves than music. I went out to drive them away, but to no avail.

Richard's Appeal for Help

On returning from shopping in the city on a Saturday morning, in 1985, Richard's car was outside our house, which surprised me. Richard came in and I offered him coffee, which he refused. It was clear to me that he was very distressed. Then he broke down in tears regarding his financial situation and asked me to have a word with the Taoiseach, Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald. "I will be meeting him next week and will certainly discuss your situation with him" I said. With that he thanked us and departed. Bredhe and I felt genuinely sorry for him.

Following a small meeting of MEP's with Dr. Fitzgerald, I asked if I could have a private word with him. "I'm in a hurry, but come into the office" he said. "It's about Richard Wood" I said, and right away Garret said "that man, he ruined my holiday last year. I went to Finland to talk to our owners of Bula Mines and got a deal which satisfied Richard and I was no sooner home, than he broke the agreement". I was shocked, saying "Taoiseach, I was unaware of that – thank you for seeing me and sorry for taking up some of your valuable time". Now I could understand why Tadgh Carey, UCC President, was so critical of Richard when drawing up the agreement to let Richard have the use of Fota House. Later that year I had a very heartfelt personal letter from Richard, which we appreciated and yes, we did offer him support and hospitality to ease his burden, but scarcely enough to merit such a letter, I thought to myself.

ROCKROHAN, CARRIGROHANE, COUNTY CORK.

Telephone: (021) 41019

19th December '85.

Dear Tom & Bredhe,

I would like to thank you for all your support both moral and practical during the past months. It has been a great source of strength to realise that there has been such concern and such reliable assistance in the background. I must say that many, many people have been wonderful, but you have been especially so. I wish you a very happy Christmas, and every possible success in 1986.

Yours sincerely, Richard.

Chapter 12 - My career in UCC

Home Life in Cork

At the time the Wildlife Park was being established our daughter Mary was 16 years and our son 13 years of age. Mary was very keen on a veterinary career and towards that end, she worked with a young Veterinary Officer during the summer holidays. Almost every Sunday the family went to Fota for the gardens and the developing Wildlife Park. One Sunday when Thomas and his mother could not travel, I took her to see the animals on the dairy farm. As we walked in the enclosure where the weanlings were (5-6 months old) they gathered around. She got quite nervous, so I just said they want to get to know you.

"This is very strange" Mary said, "because every farm I go to with the Vet, they just run away from me". So I explained to her that no dogs or sticks were allowed on this dairy farm. All animals are treated as they should be treated, with kindness. In that way, they are easier to handle. In my youth, particularly at fairs, I saw so much unnecessary beating of cattle with ash plants, that I banned sticks and dogs on the dairy farm in Fota. The animals are much easier to deal with and they perform better, if they have no reason to be afraid. When we went to the field where the cows were, there was the same reaction with the occasional lick of a big wet tongue. This made her even more determined to do Veterinary Science.

Mary was a good student, but her brother Thomas, three years younger was far from being a serious student, but that is normal, as boys are a bit more immature, at a young age, than girls. Personally, I was not too happy about her working as a Vet, with large animals, given the lack of facilities for restraining large animals on most farms. There was another matter too, namely the risk of getting Brucellosis (Brucella Abortus) which was very prevalent and can be very serious for humans. However, she was determined, despite my reservations. Based on the points system of the Leaving Certificate, she missed Veterinary Science by one point.

Having read a scientific paper "Occupational Brucellosis in County Cork" published by Professor John P. Corridan and Dr. Bridget Foley of UCC, I was relieved that she did not get to study Veterinary Medicine. Fortunately due to the research work by Dr. Brendan Cunningham at the Dairy Research Centre, Moorepark in County Cork, the disease is virtually eliminated now, in dairy herds.

She was shattered and just accepted the next highest offer, namely Dental Science. That was a mistake, as she had no interest whatever in the subject and opted out after some wasted years, and studied a course on how to teach English to people who spoke French, German and Spanish etc., in Brussels. The pay was not great, but the experience was very satisfying, while waiting to decide her future career.

College Politics

After his heavy defeat in the Governing Body re the purchase of Fota, the president changed his atitude towards myself and the work in my department. He consulted me on various matters and I always gave him my honest opinion, even if he did not like it.

Then a very unusual issue arose. A professor and head of department went to the president to report that a male member of his staff had been beating a more senior member of staff, his wife.The students threatened to take serious action if he didn't do something about it. The prof panicked and went to the president to solve the problem.

The president called a special meeting of the governing body. Before going to the meeting, I phoned the professor, put a few questions to him which he answered, and then asked if he'd be at that number in case he was needed to give evidence. He answered that he would.

I went up to the meeting. There weren't many in attendance and the only outside member who turned up was the Lord Mayor, Mr Gerald Goldberg, a very powerful figure in the legal profession.

The president opened the meeting, giving the background. Rev Prof Brendan O'Mahony, professor of philosophy, made some remarks on wife beating. Immediately Mr Goldberg made a verbal assault on Prof Brendan in a most hostile manner.

I was very taken aback and asked to be allowed to speak. I said "I must be the only person present who did not know that these two people were husbans and wife, but that is irrelevant. What I do know is that this man is regularly assaulting another member of our staff and the professor and head of the department is at this number and he is waiting and willing to come here to give evidence to that effect."

With that Mr. Goldberg got up and left slamming the door behind him. After a brief silence the president said "What should we decide?". To which I replied "We cannot renew the contract of a person who is assaulting another member of our staff and I propose that he not be re-appointed". Prof Brendan seconded it and the vote was unanimous. Nobody else, at any stage, said anything, which surprised me.

The president closed the meeting, following which he called to thank me, saying "Thank God there was someone there to stand up to that bully" and that was the end of his call.

New UCC President in 1978

President McCarthy was succeeded by the College Registrar, Professor Tadgh Carey. Professor Carey was a big man from a very large family, all boys, except for the youngest, a girl. They were intellectually a very gifted family, from a very humble background – all scholarship material.

Although I was now fourteen years in UCC, I did not know Tadgh very well. He had his own group of friends, with whom he socialised, going to GAA matches, road bowling, and having a few pints. In all those years, I never had a one-on-one discussion with him, so what followed was all the more of a surprise to me.

Vice President

The new President's Secretary, Ann Heskin, phoned me to say the President wished to see me in his office. The appointment was made and I went to see him. "Straight down to business", he said, "I want you to be our new Member of the HEA" (Higher Education Authority). "That is fine", I said "I would love to contribute on that Body" and then he said "I want you to be my Vice-President". There was just one Vice President at that time. I was completely taken by surpise saying "There are more experienced people than me, mentioning some of his friends. Tadgh just replied "no f....g back bone". "Could you give me 24 hours to think about it?" I said. "Yes" said Tadhg "but I hope you won't let me down". My belief was that the Vice-President should be a great academic figure, which I was not and never would be.

On going home, I surprised Bredhe with the news and she put the more sensible view on things saying "it's a good manager / business type person he needs" and, of course, she was right. Good academics are rarely good managers, I concluded and having thought over what she said and after 14 years in the University system, I concluded that I could do a good job as VP.

My suspicious mind, however thought of the answer President Johnson of the USA gave when asked why he had a certain individual in his cabinet he replied in his usual earthy fashion saying "It's better to have that, son of a bitch, inside the tent piddling out than outside piddling in".

Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, a renowned economist and former Ambassador to India, was asked by President Johnson to write an article for him on the

economy. Galbraith relates that he worked hard on the article and went to the Oval Room in the White House, where he presented it to the President, who promptly began to read, turning pages and saying "Excellent Ken, excellent Ken" before putting down the script and saying "you know Ken, lecturing on the economy is like piddling down your leg, hot to yourself, but nobody else".

Tadhg could use earthy language too and in that respect I could be his equal. I went back to Tadhg the next day and let him know that I would accept the post, provided that Sean O'Donovan could get extra help. "No problem" said Tadhg, offering me a drink to celebrate, which I declined, as I had a general rule not to drink before 6pm when working. A young agricultural graduate from a good dairy farm in Waterford was recruited to help Sean. His name was J.J. Kett and as mentioned earlier, he fitted in very well particularly in managing the large dairy herd in Fota, which was generating a good income for the College, as well as being a great teaching resource.

Vice Presidential Functions

There were no rules laid down other than to help the President and to deputise for him in his absence. In the absence of the President, I chaired Faculty Meetings and Governing Body Meetings. I represented the College at various outside functions, when requested by Tadhg. Of course, there were various bodies, within the College which I was automatically expected to attend, particularly the Finance Committee. The Buildings Committee and the Adult Education Committee, which previously had outsiders as Chairpersons voted to put me in the Chair. All the previous Chairpersons were very tolerant of Leo White's late arrival and allowing him to open up some issue on the minutes, which had already been agreed.

As the new Chairman, I was determined to put a stop to that. The Minutes were agreed and we were on the next item when Leo made his usual grand entrance, saying "Mr. Chairman, there is an item in the Minutes which I want to challenge". "Sorry Mr. Whyte, the Minutes have been agreed and signed, and I am not going to have the Minutes discussed again", I said. I could see approving smiles all round. I continued saying "If you wish to alter Minutes in future, you must be here on time".

The meeting continued in a business like fashion and afterwards the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Sean O'Murchu and two other members, thanked me for refusing Leo's request to re-open discussion on the Minutes, which was his usual habit in the past. Leo was more punctual after that for Adult Ed. Meetings, but not for other meetings inside and outside of College.

There was a significant difference between Arts and Science Faculties on the one hand, Law, Medicine and Dairy Science Faculties on the other hand. Arts and Science Faculty Meetings had a habit of making the business fit the time whereas the other three Faculties had very brief meetings.

Most of the Medical Faculty members had work outside of College as indeed many of the Law Faculty had – hence their interest in getting the business over quickly, to get back to their other work. Dairy Science Faculty meetings had traditionally been short and business like, due to people like "Bomber Murphy" and Professor Pyne who would not waste time. I naturally preferred brief businesslike meetings and no doubt, I annoyed many in the Arts and Science Faculty meetings, by reminding them they were time wasting by bringing in issues which were irrelevant.

The Dean of the Law Faculty Professor Ted Ryan, who was a heavy smoker, had a few headings on the back of a cigarette box, to remind himself of what he needed discussed. He had a reputation of being an expert on commercial law and being a heavy drinker. I did not know him socially, but in appearance he was typical of the

cartoon images of absent minded professors. At one of the Law Faculty meetings he proved to be the coolest man under pressure that I have ever witnessed.

It happened as follows – a former UCC student, who had been committed to the hospital for the insane, escaped. Before the police could intercept him, he arrived back in UCC carrying a hatchet like instrument and smashing windows. He burst through the door where I was chairing a Law Faculty meeting, with the weapon over the heads of Professor Ryan and myself and shouting abuse at everybody. I kept my eye on the weapon, preparing to duck, but in the middle of the tirade, he stopped, rushed out and banged the door. Cool as a breeze, Professor Ryan looked at the notes and just said "where was I now, before being so rudely interrupted?" There was a roar of laughter and relief around the table and Ted looked around as if to say, what is so funny? He truly was the epitome of the absent-minded Professor.

Student Affairs

Over the years, I took an interest in student affairs because the Dairy Science students were rather fewer in numbers and all male, they were more willing to discuss grievances or other problems with me.

A common complaint was the failure rate in first year Physics. Professor Fahy was head of the Physics and a very pleasant colleague. Now being Vice-President, I felt I had a duty to enquire into the matter and indeed I found a very high failure rate in Physics. I then got the failure rates in Physics from UCG and UCD where I found them to be significantly lower than in UCC. I took the matter up at Science Faculty meeting, but Professor Fahy was not for turning. I then took it up at Governing Body meeting, where I made the point that the students entering Science in UCC were as good as or better than those entering the other two Colleges, so the high failure rate was either due to bad teaching, or excessively hard examining.

Some of the Governors were aware of this, as was the President, but nothing was done about it. Many of the Governors were angry and it was agreed to bring the issue to the Senate of the National University, which was the body charged with governing academic matters in the three constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland. The Senate had what was known as the Standing Committee, which met the day before the Senate meeting to discuss any unusual issues which might arise and other matters such as awarding Honorary Degrees etc.

I raised the issue of the first year Physics in UCC at the Standing Committee, giving the failure rates in first year Physics in the three Colleges. Dr. Whitaker, as Chancellor, and Professor Tom Murphy of UCD, the Vice-Chancellor took a very serious view of the matter and it was agreed that the results in Cork should be brought into line with those in Dublin and Galway. The full Senate meeting on the following day agreed that the marks for Physics in Cork must be altered to come into line with the other Colleges. As I emerged from the building, there was a team of newspaper and TV Reporters asking what was decided, to which I just replied a statement will be issued shortly. Just how they got to know about the issue intrigued me. The matter was reported on the 6pm TV news.

Students Health

Because of the lower student numbers, taking the Dairy Science courses, it was easier to notice someone missing. I noticed a boy missing for two weeks, so I asked if anybody knew where the boy was. There was a total silence and they just filed out. Then one boy came back and said, "I know where he is and what is wrong with him". "Tell me", I said. "He is in his flat downtown suffering from depression, following an operation to remove a testicle". "Give me the name and the address", which he was only too willing to do.

Following this, I contacted Dr. Godfrey,

who looked after student health problems. Dr. Godfrey acted immediately and the boy got back on track. About thirty years later a famous Cork hurler, Joe Deane, who was off the Cork team, went public to announce that he had a cancerous testicle removed and was back hurling again. Quite by chance, I saw him in Fota. I went over to him, introduced myself and congratulated him for going public about his cancer and told him the story of my student. "Your action, as a nationally admired sportsman in revealing your successful operation, will encourage men with a similar problem to take action in time to save their lives". Joe is a modest hero and he thanked me sincerely for what I said, as he was going out to play a game of golf. We need more such heroes.

We also need more help for young people, who despite of or because of our new found wealth, have more problems than students in my era, because we had no money. I believe that extra resources to help young people now, such as extra spending on all sorts of sport and recreation, would help to reduce drink, drugs, violence and addictions.

Monday Morning Meetings

The Officers of the College met on Monday mornings, with the President in the Chair. At that time, the President of the Students Union was Charlie Kerrigan a self confessed member of the Gay and Lesbian Community. Some faculties held an annual dinner-dance function. Tadhg who was fed up of going to such functions asked me to represent him at the Engineering Students Dinner Dance.

I was seated beside the Auditor and he began to make veiled references to the College Chaplin, who was also a guest at the function. "What are you trying to tell me about the Chaplin" I enquired. He replied "The Chaplin is gay". "Are you sure of that" I asked, and he said "Yes, I am". I changed the subject, much to Bredhe's approval.

When the meal and the Chairman's speech was over, the band started the music and the first couple on the dance floor was the Chaplin and Charlie Kerrigan, and the Chairman just said "There goes Charlie's Chaplin". That was on a Friday night. At the Officer's Meeting on Monday morning under the heading of any other business, I related the story about Charlie's Chaplin, much to the amusement of everybody, except President Tadgh who just said "f...k that!" and grabbed the phone saying to his Secretary "Get me the Bishop". The rest of us left the room. On the following Monday, under the item of any other business, I enquired about the Chaplin and the Bishop's response. The Chaplin was removed and he went to the USA where he found a job in a boys' school. I was disgusted with the Church and damn sorry I ever got involved.

Sometime later a girl was assaulted on a dark winters evening as she was going down the front avenue of the college, but her attacker was overpowered by a student and held by the student, until the police arrived. Under any other business, on the following Monday morning, I raised this issue, saying we criticise students regularly, but here we have a student who should be thanked for his bravery. "Jasus, you are right says Tadhg and he called in the Secretary.

We all left and I could see the glow of satisfaction in Tadgh after some bit of good news. A few days later I had a call from Tadhg to say he found the name of the heroic student and he would be coming to the President's Office and would I like to be there? "I certainly would", I said. The student came in, on time, a big man, face battered and looking older than the general run of students. "Tell us what happened", said Tadhg. "I was going down the front avenue" he said "and I heard a girl in distress, so I overpowered the man and made a citizen's arrest". "You are a big man" I said "and I see your face is battered, you should be able to defend yourself" He replied "I was heavyweight champion boxer in the NUI (National University of Ireland)

but you cannot use violence in making a citizen's arrest". "Where did you learn all these details?" I asked, to which he replied "I was Security Manager for McDonalds in London for five years". "What happened when the police arrived?" Tadgh enquired. The culprit cried out "Arrest this man for assault", and I said "arrest us both and we can discuss the matter in the police station" he said.

Of all the thousands of students in UCC, there was not a more able and suitably qualified person to deal with the criminal, who was sexually assaulting the girl. He had come back to UCC to do a higher degree, after he had made some money in London. Overnight, we was a hero in UCC, in Cork and after the court case, where the criminal got a jail sentence, his name got into the media in all of Munster.

His reward was a word of praise from Judge and a letter of thanks for Tadhg.

He left UCC shortly afterwards, I heard because of threats of violence from the criminal fraternity.

Honorary Degrees

I served on the Senate of the NUI from 1976 to 1985. During that time I had the honour of presenting a number of people for Honorary Degrees. The presentation I enjoyed most was presenting Mr. Vincent O'Brien, the world's most successful horse trainer, according to the Financial Times and various other publications.

I had never met him and I did not know exactly where his home was in Co. Tipperary. I did know his Bank Manager, who lived in Cork City approximately 500 yards from our house. He was a Mr. Roche. I called to see him, told him why I wanted to meet Vincent O'Brien and asked for directions. Immediately he said I will go with you and I will arrange a time and date, which will suit Vincent.

On the appointed day, my wife Bredhe and my teenage daughter Mary who rode a pony decided they would love to see O'Brien's establishment too. It was about 55 miles from Cork, and not far off the main Cork - Dublin Road. Security was evident at the front gate, but Mr. Roche was known, so we were waved through.

Vincent and his Australian wife gave us a very gracious welcome. Tea and biscuits were served by a coloured young man, who was obviously a house servant. To my great surprise, Vincent was a very quiet spoken man – nothing like any sport horse owner or trainer that I had ever previously met. Following the refreshment, he invited me to see his stables and horses. Mary, being very interested, accompanied us.

The attention to detail was extraordinary. Each horse was weighed every week. A horse dentist came from Britain regularly. I asked about these details, to which he replied as follows – weight maintenance is a very good measure of the health and the dentist checks the teeth as a sore tooth would make the horse react badly to the bit in the mouth, during a race and could also affect the appetite. He then showed me the timing device on the track, to which only his daughter and himself had access. "Why just himself and his daughter, I enquired?" To which he replied "knowledge of the horses would only encourage young people to start gambling", mentioning a well known family business, which was destroyed by gambling. Being a horse lover, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to him as he spoke so very calmly. Then he showed me the airstrip he had made for flying horses to overseas races. "They arrive less stressed after an air journey than after a sea crossing", he said. He was the first to fly horses to races. "How about the noise in the plane - the old propeller planes?" I enquired. "We stuff the horses' ears with cotton wool" he replied.

As we returned to the dwelling house, I referred to his amazing achievements, to which he replied "I have been very lucky". "It has to be more than luck" I said. "Well, I will tell you a true story" Vincent said. "I

had a client in Canada, a Mr. Taylor who asked me to go to Kentucky to buy a horse there. It didn't suit me to go, at that time, but he put a lot of pressure on me, so I went, and I did not like the horse. I phoned Mr. Taylor and told him "I would not buy the horse". Mr. Taylor was very disappointed, so I said "there is another horse here that I like; perhaps I should buy him" "Buy him if you wish" said an angry disappointed Mr. Taylor".

"I bought the horse", said Vincent and that horse turned out to be Nijinsky, the greatest horse of his generation. "There was more than luck in that", I said. "Perhaps", said Vincent, but I should not have been there".

We returned to the house, where his wife Jacqueline was showing her latest book of photographs. She was a very accomplished professional photographer with many beautiful books to her credit, one of which, I am proud to possess "Great Irish Houses and Castles". She also photographed all the great horses trained by Vincent.

I recall that at the Standing Committee where I strongly supported the proposal to give Vincent O'Brien an honorary degree, there was also a proposal to award an honorary degree to another very well known and very wealthy man, who also had his successes on the racing track. This was about to be approved, when I intervened saying "Chancellor, I follow the achievements of various racing stables, and I heard a rumour that a scandal associated with that person is about to break". President Murphy who proposed him was clearly annoyed. The Chancellor, Dr. Whitaker, being a very cautious man and clearly a man who did not want any association of corruption with the National University just said "I will make some enquiries this evening and let us meet 30 minutes before the full meeting of the Senate in the morning" That was agreed.

The Standing Committee was all present at 9.30am. Chancellor Whitaker opened the meeting saying – "I enquired into the concerns Professor Raftery expressed and I regret to inform you that there is substance to his concerns. Hence, I propose that the honorary degree not be conferred at this time."

"That leaves us with a vacancy" he continued, "have any of you a suggestion?"

"Bernadette Greevy" I suggested. Immediately President Murphy said, "Absolutely right, she should have been honoured before now". Everybody present agreed and the meeting was over in less than 20 minutes. I have no idea how her name occurred to me in an instant, but I had long been a great admirer, as my wife had been, of her beautiful voice on both radio and television.

Chancellor Whitaker approached me after the meeting, thanking me for raising the issue about the horse owner and asking me did I know Bernadette Greevy. I replied that I did not and never had the pleasure of hearing her singing live, but I always listened to her when she sang on radio or television "very interesting" replied Dr. Whitaker. The conferring ceremony was in Iveagh House, the former property of Lord Iveagh of the Guinness family, and it was bequeathed to the State in 1939, which used it for the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Lord Iveagh was Chief Executive of the Guinness Company until 1889 running the largest brewery in the world at that time on 64 acres in Dublin City. Iveagh House is located at 80-81 St. Stephens Green, Dublin and is regarded by many as one of the most beautiful houses in our capital city.

Vincent O'Brien and his wife and family invited Bredhe and myself for lunch in the Berkley Court, before the conferring ceremony. He was quiet, as usual, with his wife Jacqueline and family doing most of the talking.

A formal dinner was held that evening and I was seated beside Mrs. Jacqueline O'Brien.

During the discussion, I enquired if Vincent was nervous before major races – he seemed so calm about everything. "Yes he is nervous" she said "the stakes are so high and very often he has to make difficult decisions. For example", she said "I was in hospital in London and Vincent phoned and in coded language let me know on the eve of the English Derby that there was a problem with his entry Golden Fleece. The horse was not as well as he normally should be. So Vincent had to make the choice of withdrawing him or run the risk of running him and the famous horse coming in last. He took the risk and Golden Fleece won the Derby setting a new record time, but two days later Golden Fleece had equine fever". I replied saying "I can well understand why he would be nervous in such a situation".

Amongst the after dinner speakers, a number of people continued asking for tips for the forthcoming Derby. Vincent was reluctant to give tips, but he did say that he had a good horse running named El Grand Senor. He did not mention that his eldest son also had a runner in the Derby.

On Derby day I watched the race and El Grand Senor lost by inches to his son's horse named Secreto. David became the youngest to win the Epson Derby, the Irish Derby and a French Derby – after which he walked away from racing when his first son was born. He emigrated to France with his Australian wife. David and his new wife set up a vineyard. Clearly the stresses of vine growing were less than that of horse-training especially when expected to match his father's incomparable record.

Sometime after the Honorary Degree for Vincent O'Brien, I got a letter from him inviting Bredhe and myself to the official re-opening of the racecourse in Phoenix Park. I accepted and following our arrival we were directed to the VIP section of the stand. It was not my scene, but Bredhe enjoyed admiring the ladies exotic styles of dress. I excused myself and went down to admire the horses and to meet the ordinary punters. During my walkabout, I saw something which must be illegal – a child, too small to see into the Tote window, holding up the money and shouting the name of the horse. A hand took in the money and gave back a slip of paper to the child who walked away casually, as if it was not his first time doing so.

I moved on to the bookies, who were shouting out the odds. Suddenly one of the bookies near me changed the odds and a stampede of people with fist-fulls of paper money, nearly knocked me down. As I was recovering my composure, I got a tap on the shoulder from a man I had known some years earlier in Cork and with all the sarcasm he could muster just said – "That's the recession for you Tom" and at the time the economy was in deep recession, with poverty and emigration etc.

I returned to the stand to find Bredhe in deep discussion with Norma Smurfit. She introduced me to Mrs. Smurfit and Norma returned to telling her about some fundraising she was involved with. Soon afterwards I suggested that we go to avoid the traffic at the end of the races. Vincent O'Brien was busy around horses, which was of course, his business and profession. I had no desire to go to any further race meeting, but my youngest sister Joan, who worked in Rome and was home on holidays eight years later, pleaded with me to take her to Galway races in July, and I reluctantly agreed.

As we travelled towards Galway, the first surprise was bill-boards with the notice "Park and Fly" but I continued driving. As we were in the stand early, I viewed the scene and the coming and going of "choppers" was reminiscent of a television series called "Mash" which was based on a field hospital in the Korean war. How crazy and money wasting, I thought. During the racing, I had occasion to go to the bathroom. On my way to the bathroom, I walked through a huge bar. In the bar there were a number of large screens and a very large number of people viewing the racing on

TV which they could have done from the comfort of their own homes. But then I noticed what I initially took to be ATM machines, but they were in fact machines where people placed their bets. So a whole lot of people spent their days in Galway, without ever seeing a horse, except on the large screens. It was a far cry from the Galway races of the fifties and sixties, when there was just two days of racing and you viewed the horses out of doors and placed your bets in the tote or with the bookies.

We left before the last race to avoid the traffic - horse racing was not my scene. Bredhe and I preferred the August Horse Show in Ballsbridge, which we regularly attended, particularly to view the Aga Khan Trophy Competition, where Ireland usually performed very well.

I worked with farm horses on the home farm and I admired show jumping horses and race horses. I preferred steeple chasing to flat racing. I loved all horses – they are such noble animals – probably the most noble of the tamed species. My real hero amongst horses was a horse named Arkle, ridden by Pat Taffe, a tall man for a jockey. There was great rivalry between the British Champion Mill-House and the Irish Champion Arkle, but Arkle put the issue beyond doubt in the Cheltenham Gold Cup by beating Mill-house comprehensively, his third victory in the Gold Cup of Cheltenham. English followers grew to admire and love Arkle.

At that time we had a coin in old Irish coinage with the image of a horse under which was the figure 2.5 – meaning two and a half shillings. It was referred to as a half crown. An enterprising rogue, who recognised that the British followers of steeple chasing had grown to love Arkle, collected a large quantity of half-crowns and put each half crown in a little box with the image of a horse showing through a little window in the box. In bold letters on the box was the name Arkle. Price £5 sterling. When asked what the 2.5 was he replied, it was Arkle's best distance.

He had a thriving demand prior to the Cheltenham Gold Cup about 3 years after Arkle retired, until some Irish racing correspondent exposed the scam and he beat a quick exit from Cheltenham. I never indulged in betting on horses but I rarely missed viewing the great steeple chases and the prestigious flat races – I was addicted to the beauty of these noble animals, and I still am.

After Dinners

Dinners after conferrings were usually pleasant, but not very exciting. James Galway and Cardinal O'Fiaich changed that after their conferring. I watched James Galway during the conferring. He had such an attractive smile and twinkling eyes. He was seated side on to the audience as were all the candidates. Bredhe was quite near him, and James after the conferring approached her saying "I was admiring your profile and beautiful red hair", clearly a man who liked the ladies.

As we were sitting down for dinner, a person came in behind me with a box and placed it beside James Galway. After the meal, James was invited to play the sash (the Ulster Unionist Anthem). James said of course provided the Cardinal sang it with him. To my great surprise the Cardinal gave us a rendering of the Sash, accompanied by James Galway on the tin whistle. It went down very well. Then James took out another flute and played a beautiful melody, using the two flutes simultaneously.

Finally, James took up the box that I had seen being carried in behind me and opened it to produce the magic flute. He was generally regarded as both the supreme interpreter of the classical flute repertoire and a consummate entertainer. Subsequently, he became Sir James Galway. During his touring he sold over 30 million albums. He played all over the world to audiences and to Presidents, Kings and Queens etc. He spends most of his free time supporting charitable organisations. It was an evening I will never forget.

One failure and one success in the Senate of the NUI

One of my post graduate students was killed in the Tusker Rock plane crash. His M.Sc. thesis had already been approved by the extern examiner. I proposed that the degree should be conferred posthumously, but the request was narrowly defeated.

Sometime after this, I had a call from a former colleague, asking that his daughter, who was dyslexic be allowed a tape recorder for her entrance exam. I replied that I would need medical evidence that she was dyslexic, before bringing the matter to the Senate. The evidence was supplied from both Welsh and Irish doctors.

Under the Order of Any Other Business, I raised this request and Dr. Murphy of UCD said "It has never been done before, but why not give it a try", and it was agreed. Her father had by this time gone to a post in the World Bank, in Washington.

Approximately 30 years later, I had a call from him in Washington, on the day after my dear wife Bredhe died, offering sympathy and as an afterthought, he said thanks for getting my daughter into UCD. She is now designing bridges and very successful at it. Never a word of thanks however, from his daughter – good manners was not on her agenda. That was not very typical of students and their parents, to whom I gave help with unusual problems. My period on the Senate was fulfilling, and I enjoyed it. Unfortunately, pressure of work after changing my career forced me to relinquish my seat on the Senate.

Time on the Higher Education Authority (HEA)

HEA meetings were not as exciting as the Senate of NUI meetings – usually trying to prioritise State funding. At my first meeting, there was a considerable amount of money to be devoted to a Micro Electronic Research Centre and it was taken for granted that this would be established in UCD with considerable money via the Industrial Development Authority. I knew that Dr.Wrixon of our Electrical Engineering Department was an expert in this area and that he had a good contact in the IDA.

The moment I arrived home, I got on to him. Gerry had a rather quick temper and he was less than pleased. He phoned me back almost immediately saying he was taking the 7.30am train to Dublin to meet his contact and invited me to join him, which I did.

We went straight to the IDA in Ballsbridge, where we were met shortly afterwards by his contact, who took us into his office. Jerry asked me to relate what I had heard and he appeared rather annoyed that UCD were automatically assuming that the IDA would fund the research unit. I left the two of them to plan the next move but I met up with Gerry on the train home. The smile of satisfaction said it all. The money came to UCC and the project prospered.

His next big idea was to power the dairy unit on the farm in Fota using solar energy. This was agreed provided that there would be back up services in the event of the solar energy unit breaking down or generating insufficient electricity. He had the best known Architect in Ireland, a Mr. Scot to design the structure, but even then, it was not a thing of beauty.

Jerry had John Montague, UCC's Poet in residence; compose a poem for the official opening and a marquee and band for the ceremony. In truth, it had become a bit of a nuisance for fellows milking cows, who just wanted to be sure that the milking machine and milk coolers would work reliably day after day.

One of the most interesting things we noticed was that the unit was at its very best after a snowfall, because it got more light reflected on the panels with a clear blue sky and snow to reflect light back on to the panels.

The dairy farm abandoned its use, but the Scientists continued the monitoring for

some considerable time afterwards. Just what the final conclusions were, I do not know. In time, it was just abandoned – a bit of a blot on the landscape, which was subsequently demolished.

Unusual Request for Lecture

Of all the requests for a lecture, the most unusual had to be a request from the President of the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons.

The request came from Dr. Ivor Drury a former Ballyfin student and a much respected man in the medical circles. I had met Dr. Drury on a number of occasions – a small man, like myself and of course, we discussed Ballyfin.

A Good Conduct Prize was presented to a Leaving Certificate Student each year in Ballyfin, to the boy who was deemed to be of good conduct and a good example for all the boys in the school. Dr. Drury initiated that competition and donated a prize each year – I was not a recipient, and I did not expect to be. I contacted Dr. Drury about the request for a lecture and he explained that the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons were holding their annual meeting in Cork and that it was usual to have a non-medical lecture and he had proposed that I should give them a talk on Fota – as the Fota project was of national as well as local interest. I agreed, and the date was set for 13th March 1981.

Another unusual lecture request I received was an invitation to speak at the bishops conference in Maynooth in the early nineties.

As I entered the hollowed walls of this famous seminary, I was directed to a waiting room. Almost immediately a man whose face was familiar to me entered the room. He introduced himself as Kieran Whelan, religious correspondant with the Irish Times. Coffee and biscuits were provided. He asked me a few questions on a speech I had made in the Seanad (Senate) and then smiling he asked if I knew why I had been invited to speak to the bishops. "I have no idea - indeed I am intrigued to know why", I said.

With a broad smile Kieran just said "The bishops agree with what you said in the Seanad. They will not say it themselves, but having you say it in their presence means they approve". "The cute b------s", I said. And Kieran, just getting up to leave said "Two thousand years of intrigue and history", and off he went. So now I knew I was being used, and I was none too happy about it.

Bishop Casey introduced me to a room full of bishops. I said my little bit and invited questions. Very few were forthcoming.

Some bishop I did not recognise thanked me and led me out to my car. The issue was so unimportant to me that I did not keep a copy of the talk, nor can I remember the content that so impressed the bishops!

Watching the 6pm television news that evening I saw myself lecturing the combined hierarchy of the Irish catholic church - so they had the power to get the national television to relay part of my speech.

Shortly afterwards Bishop Casey was outed for having fathered a child with an American woman. He was re-located to South America, disgraced in the eyes of the general public. Meanwhile, bishops at home continued to ignore child sexual abuse by priests, by simply shifting the offenders to pastures new, where they continued offending.

The emergence of the Ryan report on child abuse in recent times reflects very badly on the hierarchy. They failed to protect children by not de-frocking such priests, while bishop Casey, who had sex with a consenting adult was hounded out of the "Island of saints and scholars".

Progress of Wildlife Park

The Wildlife Park became very popular and is now attracting over 360,000 visitors

a year. It has become renowned for the breeding of endangered species, particularly cheetahs, of which over 200 were born in Fota between 1982 and 2008. Many were returned to their native habitats, and to other parks and zoos around the world. Likewise the endangered European Bison are breeding very successfully and six of these bison were returned to Eastern Poland in 2008, where they were almost completely wiped out during the two Great Wars in Europe. Scimitar Horned Oryx, also critically endangered, are also breeding well in Fota and being returned to their native habitat.

Giraffes to Australia

The most amazing request we had came from Australia, for two Giraffe. Two female semi-grown giraffe were sent by plane to Australia - seems incredible, but true.

The Austrtalians wanted giraffe from Ireland because of our renowned disease-free status, bearing in mind the importance of the Australian livestock industry. Two special steel crates were made by Damien O'Donovan, who had made all the steelwork for the giraffe house in Fota.

The crates were then padded and the operation was supervised by a vet from the Dept of Agriculture, a MR Kent. The crated giraffes were transported by boat to England and flown in a Boeing 747, which was specially altered for the transport of horses, to Los Angeles, and from there to Australia, where they arrived safely and in good health. There were no complaints from the Australians, so I presume they were pleased with the new arrivals.

Trip to California

In 1980 Bredhe and I went to California for two reasons, number one, my eldest niece Maureen Archbold, was getting married and her father had become estranged, so the family needed all the support they could get.

And two, I wanted to see the large dairy herds in California, where I might learn something new for our herd in Fota.

The wedding was a great success, and we stayed with the mother of the bride, my sister Bridie. During discussions I asked about Jim Kane and the Reilly's and the reply was sickening.

Bud Reilly drowned while drunk in his own swimming pool and the children I asked, all on drugs she replied. And Jim Kane? Divorced and an alcoholic, she replied. Too much wealth could be dangerous, or more dangerous than too little, I thought to myself.

Milk Production in California

In the 1970s an American agricultural scientist, Dr. Bob Leonard, worked for some time at the Dairy Research Center in Moorpark Fermoy, County Cork. I got to know him, so I wrote to him before my visit to California expressing a wish to meet him and expressing a wish to see some of the large herds. I was hoping to get some new ideas for the dairy herd in Fota. He replied that he'd like to meet me, and gave me his phone number.

After the wedding I phoned him to see about getting to see a herd of about 200 cows. He paused and then said, "I thought you wished to see a large herd. I doubt if I can get a herd of only 200 cows but I'll try." That was some surprise.

We agreed to meet up for a coffee and a chat. After the coffee he took me through the tillage area of the San Fernando Valley where there was tillage crops as far as I could see. As we passed a vegetable farm where I saw men and women picking vegetables and dropping them up on conveyor belts which brought them to a grading machine as it crawled along.

I took my camera out to photograph the operation and as I did Bob just reached out and put my camera down saying, "If they see a camera they will abscond as they are all illegal immigrants from Mexico and the

Bredhe and I in California in 1980 with Bridie Tighe

farmers will blame me".

No doubt these illegal immigrants were badly paid and badly housed with no rights to healthcare or housing, in one of the wealthiest areas on earth.

Bob then took me to a small dairy farm, which was a rundown unit. Finally he took me to see the real dairy farms where there were thousands of cows in what were known as feedlots.

Milking went on over 24 hours. Dung and urine were just pushed out to dry and then made into huge mountains to be taken away and used to fertilise the land for the tillage farmers.

Housing consisted of light roofs which were just sunshades. Milk yields per cow were very high, and the cows were milked three times a day.

Feeding

These cows never saw a field of grass let alone a feed of grass. Their diets were the byproduct of the massive tillage industry.

"How can they decide what to feed?" I asked Bob. He replied as follows, "They phone into the university, giving details of the byproducts they have. That information is fed into the computer and the computer program will calculate the percentage by weight of each of the byproducts to go into the feeder wagon which has a weight recorder and when all the ingredients are in the mixture, it just mixes up everything and then delivers it into the feeding troughs for the cows, as it travels slowly along the trough". That was interesting but of no particular value to me for our herd in Fota.

He then took me to the vegetable grading, cleaning, and packing plants. Very large articulated trucks, at least 30 were being loaded with cleaned and graded vegetables, packed and stacked in the trucks. The destination of each truck showed up on the notice board on the windscreen. Destinations included Chicago, Boston, Delaware, and everything in between. What a monstrous waste of energy I thought, but said nothing to my host.

Yes, there was nothing here, or from the

dairy herds that I could use, that would be of value to Fota or indeed to Ireland in general.

Going South

As we'd seen San Francisco and the beautiful Golden Gate Bridge we decided to travel south to San Diego, primarily to see the San Diego zoo.

On the way I wished to see the famous Botanic Garden in Los Angeles. Driving in a small air-conditioned car we had no idea of the heat outside. Consequently when we got into the cacti area the heat from the sun and from the gravel of pathways was such that we retreated into the air-conditioned center.

It was crowded as there was a painting exhibition there. Bredhe was at home here as art was her passion. There just inside, in the first room was the famous Blue Bay by the great English artist Gainsborough. Unlike Bredhe, that was the only painting I was able to recognize.

Then I heard a man calling, "Tom!" in what sounded like an Irish accent. By an amazing coincidence I knew him. He was Professor Michael Carroll an Irish man and a Professor of Mathematical Physics at Berkeley University, California. Himself and his wife came forward and we retired to the coffee shop.

We had met him a number of times with Professor Quinlan but this was our first time meeting his wife. Over coffee I said, we were going south to San Diego so as I was very anxious to see their famous zoo. "We are too", they said, "We have a holiday home and we would like to have your company and to give us all the news from home". Well that was some coincidence and some offer. They gave us their address and we parted after some more chat.

San Diego

San Diego is one of the most beautiful modern cities in the world. My primary interest in going there was to see the world-renowned zoo and to cross the border to Mexico. Our trip to San Diego was boring. We got off the highway and drove into a little town for a rest and a coffee. All eyes in the little restaurant were staring at two very white skinned people; one with a redhead and both with blue eyes, in total silence. I ordered two coffees and the talk resumed, all in Spanish.

Clearly they were all Mexican and probably illegal immigrants and very likely they felt more threatened by us than we felt about them. Bredhe was very glad to get out to our little car again. We found our friend's home in San Diego and I took them out for dinner. They selected the restaurant not far from the Mexican border. The meal was excellent, mainly Mexican food, with Californian wine, and very reasonably priced.

I expressed a wish to go to Mexico during our stay that was vetoed by our friends saying, "if you cross the border the likelihood is that you will never see your car or your handbag again", so that was the end of my Mexican dream. Apparently the criminals set up stalls on the Mexican side of the border, where unsuspecting visitors get relieved of their vehicles, wallets and jewelry.

Their summer home was a nice, medium-sized, wooden structure. On the following day they took us to a beautiful beach. The water was warm, but unfortunately I was unable to swim. Unlike Bredhe I never got swimming lessons. She was enjoying the swim when suddenly she emerged trembling cold and red spots started to appear all over her body. We were all alarmed, particularly Bredhe. She was taken straight to the hospital where the diagnosis was angioedema. I asked, was it dangerous or contagious? No, said the doctor, but do not go swimming again, it may cause some heart problems. He gave her an injection and in a couple of hours she was looking normal but very sad that she could not swim again in one of the most beautiful seas in the world.

San Diego Zoo

San Diego Zoo was opened in 1915 in Balboa Park, San Diego on 107 acres of land. The number of animals was approximately 4,000, covering 950 species. The Director of Dublin zoo, Terry Murphy had contacted the Director in San Diego Zoo to let him know that I was coming so I got a very warm reception.

In addition to the extensive collection of birds, reptiles, and mammals, it also had in its grounds an Arboretum in which it had 40 varieties of bamboo for the Chinese pandas, which they had on long-term loan from China. And it had roughly 20 varieties of eucalyptus to feed its Koalas from Australia.

We took a guided bus tour, which traverses most of the zoo. This was the first time I saw live pandas and a large number of polar bears. Given our meager resources for setting up the wildlife park, I envied the resources here in San Diego. The Manager was generous with his time and advice. I asked what their attendance figures were and he said approximately 3 million. When I expressed great surprise, he mentioned the figure in Beijing zoo, which was something like 20 million.

These kind of figures could scarcely make pleasant visiting and in any case there was no danger of that happening anywhere in Europe, let alone in Ireland.

After an excellent meeting he suggested that we should visit Sea World, which was not far away. In Sea World we saw the killer whales at close quarters. It was difficult to believe that these beautiful creatures were the most successful killers in the seas.

The best exhibit I saw in an aquarium was in San Antonio Zoo some years later. There was a wall of glass behind which there was an extraordinary collection of fish, all swimming gracefully, including the deadly stingray. A group of school children, about 50, came in and sat quietly on the floor admiring the fish. Then a lady in a diver's uniform was lowered into the fish pool and she talked through a microphone to the children about the various species including the stingray.

The children sat quietly, apparently fascinated by what they saw and heard. Normally, such a group would be noisy, but these children listened quietly and a few of them asked questions especially about the stingray and her answers came through loud and clear through the microphone.

I had my grandson Sean (Mary's' son) with me, a few years older than the group of children but he too was fascinated listening. On the way out, he saw a pool where Dolphins were swimming and some children were feeding them with food which they had purchased nearby.

Naturally he got in on the act and he managed to touch the dolphins as he fed them. The pleasure that young teenager got from touching the dolphins was amazing. I had difficulty trying to take him away as we were to meet his parents at an appointed time.

I believe all children love animals and the more they know about these animals, the more they will come to respect and protect them.

Family Tragedy

Shortly after my sister Margaret died suddenly, after a minor operation, leaving her husband with thirteen in family. The sight of the three youngest – twin boys and little red-haired girl, huddled together and dazed with grief, is as vivid in my mind today as it was over 30 years ago. The little girl was chewing her long hair. Rev. Fr. Brown, a little man, even smaller than myself, was clearly distressed. He could not locate his reading glasses to read the prayers, so I gave him my glasses which luckily suited him.

I had met Fr. Brown previously at a Muintir Na Tire meeting. From his contributions at the Muintir meeting, it was very clear that he was a priest who cared for the poor and downtrodden. After the prayers, he was in no mood for talking – he was too distressed. I understood, and left him to his own thoughts, whatever they were.

This was the second tragedy in the family in less than ten years. A little boy who had been selected to be page boy at his eldest sister's wedding was killed instantly by a man who was entirely innocent – the little boy ran out onto a straight road and under an oncoming car.

Bredhe and I drove cross country through Thurles and Athlone to the mortuary in Roscommon. The corpse was dressed in his new page-boy suit, as his distraught mother stroked his forehead. As soon as we got out of the mortuary, I drove to the Railway Hotel where we had two strong drinks.

In the graveyard the next day, I saw the mother comforting a young distraught man – the driver of the car which killed the boy. Afterwards, I was told that he had been going on for the priesthood, but he left before ordination, much to the displeasure of his parents. Now he had no support, as he was a stranger from somewhere in Cork.

I often asked myself, how did the widower father cope, but he did and what a beautiful family he raised. He died peacefully, aged eighty five in 2008. I travelled alone to his funeral, as Bredhe had died the previous year.

Four sons stood by the open coffin and then there were nine daughters, sitting in a row. To my shame, I was unable to name more than four of the nine.

At the mass, the following morning, one of the daughters-in-law sang so beautifully that she got a standing ovation. I did not know that she had had voice training in England.

I had never been at a happy funeral in the past, but this was truly a happy funeral. The respect for Anthony and his achievement was very evident – it was a celebration of his life, a well deserved celebration. I came back home feeling the better for the experience and feeling less sorrow for myself at the loss of my loving wife Bredhe.

Chapter 13 – Involvement in politics

Career Change

In 1983 Deputy Hugh Coveney, TD and Minister in Dr. Fitzgerald's Government again invited me to join the Fine Gael Party, suggesting that I might contest the election for a seat in the European Parliament. Now that was a tempting offer, but my wife Bredhe was less than enthusiastic about it. She disliked politicians, saying they were untrustworthy and indeed many of them were, as subsequent events in the Tribunals some years later proved.

I met Mark Clinton, who was now an MEP (Member of the European Parliament) and Mark was encouraging, saying I was the kind of person which the European Parliament needs. I made up my mind to contest the election in the Munster Constituency and for that I had to get the Fine Gael Party nomination.

Tom O'Donnell, former Minister in Government was now an MEP and obviously he would get a nomination. Fine Gael decided to run two candidates, in the hope of getting two elected. The outgoing Lord Mayor of Cork City, Jim Corr, who was a very successful and popular Mayor, also sought the nomination and clearly was a very strong candidate in the City, but not very well known in rural areas, so it was going to be difficult for a newcomer to politics like myself, to win the nomination.

I had no experience of how election campaigns were run, but there was no shortage of experienced advisors to tell me how to campaign. The advisors or the handlers, as they were known, found me to be a difficult candidate.

After more than twenty years of lecturing and discussing matters with students, I was accustomed to give short and precise answers. This frustrated the handlers, who advised that when given the microphone, I should keep talking. "About what?" I enquired, and the answer was –"elaborate on and prolong your answer, because while you have the microphone, the other candidate is silent". I never really became good at that – in fact it was against my instinct, and everything I learned at University.

Fine Gael Convention

The convention to select two candidates to represent the province of Munster was really about selecting one candidate as Tom O'Donnell MEP was certain to be returned, so the contest was really about selecting either Jim Corr, Lord Mayor of Cork, or myself. To propose me, I selected a farmer, John O'Sullivan, but this was no ordinary farmer. He was a polio victim, who was left with a physical disability. A small man, but a really outstanding speaker, who had learned his debating ability, in various fora.

Only a limited number of local people from his rural area knew him, and they respected him and they adored him for a host of reasons. John, as I knew he would, charmed the audience and got a standing ovation for his speech proposing me. It was difficult to follow that, but I got a good reception. Then the delegates voted and as expected, Tom O'Donnell topped the poll and I came a respectable second. Following the selection of Tom O'Donnell MEP and myself, the Taoiseach, Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald TD, congratulated the two successful candidates and thanked the delegates etc.

As I was being congratulated by delegates, the majority of them asked who was my proposer, and I just said, he is a long time farmer friend, which was true, all of which left them more amazed, as farmers, in those days, were not noted for their education and eloquence.

Election Campaign

Campaigning was all about meeting people and getting some press coverage. Opening up Fota to the public and establishing the Wildlife Park was a decided asset in the publicity stakes. The farming community were well aware of my views, not that

they all agreed with my aspirations for their industry. I was mindful of Dr. Henry Kennedy's advice when he said "Young man, don't ever go too far ahead of the troops". It was a fine line to tread, and the agricultural industry had more to gain in Europe than any other sector of our economy by increasing agricultural output, raising the quality standards and adding value in the processing sector – but that was dependent on getting very high quality products from the farmers. All of this in turn depended on education and research, as well as business skills. Fortunately, great strides were made all round. Creameries where butter was made and the skim milk returned to the farms became a thing of the past. Amalgamation of these little units into large processing plants, which only accepted very high quality milk, meant that farmers had to step up hygiene and install milk cooling facilities etc.

This adjustment, of course, was costly for producers. Many small producers dropped out and serious dairy farmers increased cow numbers and yields per cow, allied with increased investment.

The Election and the Candidates

Fianna Fail had two candidates, who held various ministerial posts in Government, Gene Fitzgerald in Cork City and Sylvester Barrett from Co. Clare. They were expected to be elected easily. T.J. Maher, sitting MEP and farmer President of the Irish Farmers Association was a very strong candidate – expected to be easily elected. Eileen Desmond a former Government Minister, and as the only woman candidate, was expected to get a good support from women.

My running mate Tom O'Donnell MEP and former Government Minister, was as they say "a shoe in".

At the count, it quickly became clear that T.J. Maher would again top the poll. My running mate Tom O'Donnell was a good second and surprise, surprise, I was third. In the end, it finished like that with Gene Fitzgerald and Sylvester Barrett, filing the

Tom Raftery MEP c. 1984

fourth and fifth seats. Mrs. Eileen Desmond lost the 5th seat by a narrow margin. So Fine Gael got more votes than Fianna Fail for the first time in many years.

Great celebrations followed and phone calls and telegrams (many of them from past students) came in from many parts of Ireland and some from overseas. I got to bed rather late, only to be woken very early by a call from my sister Joan, in Rome, to congratulate me.

The Taoiseach called all the Fine Gael MEPs to a short meeting. He appointed Mark Clinton to be leader and much of the other issues he discussed about the European Parliament meant nothing to me, just yet.

Strasbourg Next

Fine Gael was aligned with the Christian Democrats (now the EPP) in the European Parliament. The Christian Democrats called a meeting before the next session of the Parliament for the purpose of electing a new leader, as the former leader had re-

tired. The usual lobbying went on by the aspiring candidates. Naturally, as a new comer who knew nothing about these candidates, I relied on the advice of people who had previously served in the Parliament, such as Mark Clinton, Tom O'Donnell, Joe McCartin, and Mary Bannoti, MEP. They supported a Dr. Klepps, a large German, with a good command of English and French. Dr. Klepps walked with a lame step – the legacy of a serious car accident, which almost killed him some years previously. With that business completed, I explored this new parliamentary building – a controversial design, but personally, I liked it. Others thought it was too modern.

Strasbourg

Strasbourg is a beautiful small city on the western edge of the great river Rhine. Over the years it was ruled by the Romans, who chose Strasbourg for the site of their military camp in 12BC. The first Printing Press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1434-44 in Strasbourg. In 1681 the French troops entered Strasbourg placing it under French control. In 1870 Strasbourg was taken over by the German Empire. In 1918 Strasbourg was regained by France. In 1940 Strasbourg was occupied by German troops at the beginning of what became known as the Second World War. On 23 November 1944, French troops under General Leclerc liberated Strasbourg.

In 1949 the Council of Europe was founded and Strasbourg was chosen as its headquarters, which was a clear signal that Strasbourg would no longer be the flash point of another war between the two great neighbours, Germany and France.

For the same symbolic reasons, the new European Parliament building was located in Strasbourg, but the civil servants of the new Parliament and the Commission were located in Brussels. It was far from being an ideal arrangement for MEP's who worked three weeks in Brussels and the fourth week in Strasbourg.

Holiday

Having the initial business in the Parliament, we were free for the summer holidays. First Bredhe and I decided to explore Strasbourg. A member of the staff of the Christian Democrats, an Irish man and an agricultural graduate, a Mr. Robert Fitzhenry, originally from Wexford where I got my first job, offered to show us around the city. First he brought us to the great Catholic Cathedral, which dominated much of the city. It is a huge structure, built of a rust red stone, which would suggest it was sandstone. The steeple and the bell were very impressive, but overall it seemed to be out of place, as it was in the midst of rather small, but very attractive buildings.

The weather was beautiful and coffee shops were plentiful, with people enjoying their coffee in the sunshine in a variety of languages, particularly French and German. Then there was shopping to which Bredhe was addicted, as she loved design and colour and which was of no interest to me, as I had no interest whatever in clothes. Now if I was in a motor showroom, I could be very interested, in vehicles which I could only admire and could only acquire as used cars, which I regularly did. Indeed almost every car I purchased was a used car and it was the only possible way I could acquire the kind of cars I admired.

After a few pleasant days in Strasbourg and Paris, we returned back home to Cork for the remainder of the summer. My great friend and colleague Sean called to see me. He seemed ill at ease and then said "Tom, if there are any big decisions to be made in Fota, would you make them?" That was a surprise to me and perhaps it was the reason why he had such a welcome for me when I arrived in Cork to work in UCC first, clearly he did not wish to make difficult decisions.

EU Parliament Committees

When I got home from Strasbourg, there was a large bag full of minutes from previous Parliament Committees. I phoned Mark

Clinton to ask about reading all this material and Mark, who was a most honourable and honest man just said "Ignore all that material, it's out of date, we will be starting anew in September" – well that was a relief.

To get to Brussels from Cork involved two flights – Cork to London, where we changed terminals and London to Brussels, so I had four flights per week.

Cork to Strasbourg consisted of a flight from Cork to London where a special French plane for British and Irish MEP's took us to Strasbourg on Monday and back to London on Friday and Aer Lingus to Cork again. Another four flights per week.

Members were given a list of Parliament Committees and you were given a choice of two committees from a range of about ten committees. Naturally, I selected the Agriculture Committee, not just because of my background, but also because it was the most developed committee in the Parliament. Following the food shortages, after two wars, Europe decided it must become more self-sufficient in terms of food for the future. Unlike other commodities, food has no elasticity of demand – the slightest scarcity would send the price to unaffordable levels for a large proportion of the population and the slightest surplus would cause a total collapse in process. Hence food security and food prices were uppermost in the minds of most governments in developed countries.

My second choice of Committee was "Research and Industry", which I found much more interesting.

Agricultural Committee

Given the variation of climate from Ireland to Greece and from the North of Scotland to the south of Sicily, it was extremely difficult to find a common agreement of all the various interests involved. Some extremists wanted a ban on all chemicals used in agriculture. In arguing against such a policy, I gave the example of the necessity of using chemicals to protect potatoes from the blight fungus, to which I got the answer "breed potatoes that are resistant to blight (Phystophtera infestans)" to which I replied "Every country in the Northern hemisphere have been trying to do that without success, since blight appeared in Ireland nearly 150 years ago", but he remained unconvinced. Food supply, food safety, food branding and of course food pricing all proved very difficult to get any agreement on. It brought back to me General de Gaulle's famous comment about France "How can one govern a country which has more than 100 kinds of cheese?"

Research and Industry

This committee by contrast was, for me at least, much more interesting and visits to Research and Manufacturing Facilities I found to be very exciting. We went to the Aerospace Research Facility in Toulouse for a day. We were transported in a French Airbus to Toulouse. In the Research Centre we were all obliged to wear special caps and coats to minimise dust. We viewed through glass the manufacture of satellites and the workers worked in dust free chambers.

In a small cinema they showed satellite photos of Toulouse, then focused on a particular street in Toulouse and finally on a small dog at the rear of a car, where the number plate of the car was evident. I was unable to read the number plate but the speaker and a number of my colleagues claimed they could read it. Truly Big Brother is now watching. That was 1985 and huge advances have been made since then – to begin with GPS is a product of such work.

Then on to the Airbus Manufacturing Facility. Various parts of the plane were designed and fabricated throughout Europe and all brought together and assembled in Toulouse. Roughly two years later a small number of the Committee were invited to travel on a test plane from Brussels to Toulouse and back. In the plane there were roughly 20 seats and the remainder of the plane had a bank of computers on both

aides, with no windows visible and little lights and numbers appearing all the time. The same computing power could probably be contained in something as small as a briefcase today.

Following a detailed exhibition of future designs of aircraft, which I found very interesting, we boarded the plane to return to Brussels. On the return flight the Captain invited anyone who wished to visit the cockpit to come forward. As I was in the front seat, I went into the cockpit. The co-pilot vacated his seat and I occupied it. The Captain said dial in any city in France and I dialled in Lyon. Immediately the plane gently turned to the right towards Lyon. "Now press cancel" the pilot said, and as soon as I pressed cancel, the plane returned to its path to Brussels. "Now press stall", the Captain said. I was rather slow to do that but he persisted, so I pressed the stall button and the engines went quiet, but almost immediately there was a surge of power that gave me a thump on the back. The pilot seemed to enjoy the fright I got. Then he explained how the controls can override pilot error. It was a rare experience, but personally I would not care to have the responsibility of piloting passenger aircraft.

Volkswagen Visit

A former member of the Trade Union in the Volkswagen plant organised a visit of our committee to the Volkswagen Factory in Wolfsburg in Germany. The factory unimpressive in appearance, covered many hectares. From the outside we could see trains, loaded with rolls of sheet steel entering on one side of this sprawling plant and on the other side trains loaded with motor vehicles emerging, to deliver them to distributors and from there customers in many countries around the world. No mention, of course was made of Hitler's part in making autobahns (motorways) in Germany and his part in setting up the Volkswagen plant.

The Workers

Roughly 70,000 people were employed, doing various types of work, from the bosses to the cleaners and they were all in just one Trade Union, or so we were informed. It seemed incredible to most of us.

A film of the workings of the plant was shown, accompanied by excellent commentary. Afterwards we were put into open top vehicles, with running commentary. Workers got around inside the plant on bicycles, Volkswagen made, so the workers could not steal them, as they would be recognised outside of the plant. All the heavy work was done by robots – except for the fitting of the electrical wiring (harness they called it). Men got into the engine space and walked backwards clipping on the wiring as the body of the car continued on the conveyor belt.

I was intrigued by the robots and I said so – to which I got the reply, that the Italians now had more advanced robots, which they were hoping to install shortly – that was a surprising and very honest admission – to me at least.

Afterwards we had a light meal and German beer and then we were loaded onto buses to go to view the "Iron Curtin" as Churchill called it – the dividing line between Communist controlled East Germany and Democratic West Germany.

A special platform was built, probably by the Volkswagen workers, which we mounted to see over the "Iron Curtin". It was not just one fence. There were two rows of concrete walls, with barbed wire on the tops. Armed guards and Alsatian dogs patrolled on the strip between the walls. People, who tried to escape, were usually shot.

This was what Churchill called the "Iron Curtin from the Baltic to the Adriatic". One member on our group who admired the communist ideology was horrified and I never heard him speak well of communism afterwards. Again quoting Churchill "De-

mocracy is the worst form of rule, except for all the other systems tried" – how right he was.

The Christian Democrats

(Subsequently European Peoples Party EPP) were the largest group in the Parliament. We had members from all the member countries with the exception of Britain. Yes later the British Conservatives joined. Various Prime Ministers, addressed our group, but Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor was the most frequent visitor to address our group. Chancellor Kohl was a huge man and a hugely impressive man, who answered questions very frankly. His wife, whom Bredhe met on a number of occasions, was a very handsome and friendly lady. Sadly, some years later she got an allergy to sunlight and died rather young, suicide was rumoured. In the Parliament, a German member named Elmer Brook, sat next to Mark Clinton. We were seated in alphabetical order, and Brook took a particular interest in the Irish members. He was the only German member that I knew who had a sense of humour and for that reason he enjoyed our company. He had a glass eye, which was pretty obvious and a very sharp brain and to my great surprise, he was one of Chancellor Kohl's chief confidants, which was no harm to our cause. Ireland with less than four million people, was "punching away above our weight in Europe", particularly in the European Commission where Peter Sutherland was a very powerful Commissioner, in terms of influence in the Commission, and to the President, Jacques Delors, who was the only person to have served two terms as President of the Commission.

Some years after I left the European Parliament, I had a phone call from Mr. Brook. He was in the Hayfield Manor Hotel, which is adjacent to UCC. He asked if I could come meet him and, of course, I was delighted. I went up to Hayfield Manor, where I was stopped by security. A phone call was made to Elmer Brook and I was allowed through. I was delighted to meet him and share a joke and a drink with him. He was intrigued to know why I had lost my seat and I tried to explain to him our system of proportional representation etc., which he thought was a rather crazy system. That was the last time I met him, but he did keep in touch for some years afterwards by post.

Christian Democrats Meetings

Outside of Parliamentary meetings the Christian Democrats held meetings in all the countries where they had MEP's. Countries which had a large number of MEP's such as Italy had more than one meeting. So meetings were held in many places such as Rome, Palermo, Bergamo in Italy, Athens and Porto Caras in Greece etc.

One of the Italian members named Lima was reputed to be in the Mafia. He was a medium sized, handsome middle aged and very well dressed man. He was so polite and angelic looking that I found it difficult to believe, so I asked the leader of our party, Dr. Klepps, was it true that Lima was in the mafia? Dr.Klepps just replied "Oh, Tom we were on a bus in Sicily one time and we needed to get a coffee and to go to the toilet, but everywhere was full. Lima just said stop and he got out, went to a coffee shop and people came running out the front door and the back door and Lima just beckoned to us to come in". I still found it difficult to believe that he was in the Mafia. Shortly afterwards there was a meeting of Christian Democrats in Palermo, just before the European Parliament elections of 1989. I was a little late arriving at the meeting in the City hall. On entering the hall, which was very full and television cameras were busy. The local Cardinal was there in all his finery and immediately to his right was Lima and on his left was another Italian MEP from Sicily who was suspected of being a mafia supporter. The two of them hogged the limelight. Everything about southern Italy is so different from Northern Italy that you feel you are in a different country. Before going to that meeting, I had purchased a

new car, a Mercedes. When talking to one of the staff in the Parliament, an Italian National, I suggested I would drive from Rome to Sicily in my new car, so see the beautiful scenery. He looked at me as if I was a fool, just saying "if you take that car to Sicily, you will never see it again. It will be in North Africa within 24 hours". I took his warning and went by plane. Shortly after I left the Parliament, Lima was assassinated by member of the Mafia.

Irish Visit

In 1988 the Christian Democrats agreed to have a meeting in Ireland. It was agreed to have it in Galway, not far from my old home.

One of the Parliament car drivers was from Wicklow and he was doing small deals in Irish smoked salmon in Brussels. I asked him to have a large supply of it in Galway, as I knew the Germans loved Irish smoked salmon. He had a large supply, but not enough. The salmon sold out quickly on the last day – all the 300 salmon were snapped up, mainly by the Germans within one hour. The wives of members who arrived took a bus tour in Connemara, including Bredhe my own wife, on the final day in Galway. I got a phone call from the main hospital that evening to tell me that Bredhe was there as a patient and that I should go there immediately. When I got there she was in the operating theatre. One of my many nieces, a nurse, came out to see me. She informed me that Bredhe had had a stomach haemorrhage and they were trying to control it. A surgeon appeared to say the bleeding had stopped. It could have been caused by a number of things, but he would not be surprised if it was cancer – that word was alarming. "We cannot discharge her, so you had better check back tomorrow. She is now sedated, and we will monitor things overnight". My niece was on night duty and she assured me should would keep a close eye on her overnight and advised me to go and have a rest.

Bredhe had bad health, but his was an entirely new episode. The MEP's were having a dinner in the famous oyster village, Clarenbridge, not far from the city, so I joined up with them when the dinner was virtually over. I told Mark Clinton and Joe McCartin, who were both wondering where I had gone to. I told them what had happened and they were shocked and sorry for her and for me. I was unable to eat much and as I was driving, I was afraid to drown my anxiety with drink. Little did I know that this was the beginning of a process that eventually would kill her.

Having established that she did not have cancer, and that the bleeding had ceased, she was discharged. On the drive back to Cork, I had to make many stops, as she wished to get out for whatever reason, she did not say. I suspect she was in shock. On reaching home, it was straight to bed and from that episode on, her already fragile health declined. During the summer break, the haemorrhage occurred again – but this time it was worse. She was taken into what was then called the Regional Hospital, the largest hospital outside of Dublin. It was just around the corner from home. She was put on a drip, but was losing blood quicker than the drip could supply it – thus losing consciousness now and again.

At about midnight, a phone call from the hospital, requested that I go in to see the doctor. I was informed that she could only be saved by an operation and they had to have my signature before they could operate. Naturally I signed and then a priest from the African Missions Church, which was adjacent to the hospital, arrived to anoint her. I knew the Priest; he was a Fr. Foley, from Kilkenny. By chance he was Berdhe's first cousin and an All Ireland Goal Keeper for Kilkenny in his youth. He as serving in Africa and was home in their Missionary House in Wilton and on duty that day, as the other Priests were away. I could see the shock on his face and he told me afterwards that he was convinced that he would never see her alive again. She survived, but she had a colostomy which she hated. It was reversed about six

months later, but her diet was very restricted thereafter.

The US Delegation

The European Parliament selected members to go as delegates to various important countries. At the half way point of the five year term of the Parliament, the delegations were changed. The USA delegation was the most important and popular. I was lucky and very pleased to be selected. Our first meeting in the US was scheduled for Washington, a city I was very anxious to see. As Raleigh is relatively near to Washington, we decided to visit Mary and Feza before our meeting with Congress Members. Raleigh was a rather small and dull city. Old cotton and tobacco factories had closed down and there was little else of interest to me in the area. Mary had no children and no job so she decided to drive us to Washington, as trip she had made on a number of times previously.

In the distance, as we travelled, I could see quite a number of men working and some police cars up front. "What is going on ahead of us?" I asked, to which she replied "these are the prisoners cutting the grass and generally cleaning up" – free labour I thought and was it not better for the prisoners than being bored all day in prison, I said to myself. "Do any of them escape?" I asked. "No" she replied, "those who try to escape are just shot".

As we got nearer, it was very clear that the majority of them were coloured and that the police were heavily armed. The prisoners did not show much urgency about their work, but the motorway looked much better after their work.

Washington

She drove straight into the city, which I could see was beautiful and into the hotel underground car park, no problems. The bedroom was huge, so the three of us had more than sufficient space. Mary asked would you like to go for a walk. As she was familiar with the best and safest places to go, we naturally agreed. On the way out of the room, I glanced at the notices on the door and the price of the room was astronomical, by our standards. In the foyer, I noticed the staff from the European Parliament had set up a desk there. I went to the desk and demanded to know why we were booked in to such an expensive hotel. The lady on the desk just said – Don't worry Mr. Raftery, they nearly paid us to book in here, because of the publicity it would bring them in Washington.

Outside, it was quite cool and we could see that we were very close to the White House. The next thing we saw was people lying on grills to sleep in the heat that was coming from the kitchens of the hotel. So here within a stone throw of the White House, in the capital of the richest and most powerful nation on the planet, the poor had to rely on the heat from the kitchens of the most expensive hotel I had ever been in, and of course, they were all coloured.

Subsequently, I learned more about Washington – It had the highest murder rate of any city in the USA and some of the poorest slums on the suburbs where white people would rarely, if ever, visit. The Mayor of Washington was a coloured man, with a criminal record. Truly, Washington is a mix of the best and the worst, but the outside world is never shown the dark side of the great capital, of this country. In the morning, she took us to the Mall and the Lincoln Memorial. The view from Lincoln Memorial to Capitol Hill was truly beautiful.

We went to Arlington to see President John F. Kennedy's grave, with the eternal flame and a simple headstone. Arlington is reserved for military heroes and Presidents. I walked around part of it and I was amazed at the number of Irish names to be found there. We went to see the White House, and it was less impressive than I had expected, and then she took us to the Memorial Wall, where the names of the 58,178 US Soldiers who were killed in Vietnam were recorded. What a waste of

life, and possibly the loss of life of Vietnamese, mostly innocent civilians, was greater. The dead are recorded, but we get no figures of the numbers who were maimed in mind and body. During the same period Pol Pot in "next door" Cambodia, eliminated in excess of a million of his own people to impose "pure communism" on the population of his country. Meanwhile Mao in China brought extreme poverty and death to somewhere between 30 and 40 million of his own people. Nearer home of course, Hitler and Stalin, 40 years earlier, caused the deaths of millions, most of them their own citizens as well.

Truly man can be evil – animals kill to eat, human tyrants kill for the perks of power.

Meeting Congress Members

The delegation of members of the Congress was a mix of people, mainly men, from various parts of this huge country. Their accents varied, which was hardly surprising, given the range of accents we have in our own tiny country and even in Cork City. Some of their sayings were amusing. For instance a member from Florida, in making a point said "he was as nervous as a long tailed cat, in a room full of rocking chairs". Another said "We will hold your feet to the fire, until you yield on that".

One of our delegation was a Mr. Tsunis from Greece, a former Ambassador to Moscow and at another time to Washington. He was a wise and well informed oldish man. Looking at the wives of these members of Congress, during a reception, with their face lifts and dyed hair, he just said, "Tom why can't these US ladies grow old gracefully?" Indeed, some of them looked a little odd, to say the least of it!

From Washington, we were transferred, by military owned, passenger aircraft, to Minneapolis. As we came into land at a military base, it was a bumpy landing due to very high winds. We were transferred by bus into the city, where I saw covered pedestrian bridges across the streets. I enquired about these and was told it was mainly for their harsh winters, where they can have snow on the ground for four to five months, so you could deposit your heavy clothing and travel to every store in town, without going outside.

This was farming territory and the issues were mainly about agriculture, our CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) in Europe and US Farm Supports. These were issues I was more at home with. We did not reach agreement, but both sides were better informed after these discussions. One of the visits arranged by Congress was to the world renowned Mayo Clinic at Rochdale. The patients were mainly housed in hotels and transferred to the Clinic for treatment – it seemed like a good idea to me, for a number of reasons – hotels are better suited to catering than hospitals and the possibility of transfer of disease is lessened, if the sick are not all housed under the one roof.

History and Hospitality

Bredhe's cousin was married to a Dr. Moore, who worked in the clinic, so we were dined and wined by the Moores. On the Sunday the whole delegation, plus the Moores, were taken to a hotel for lunch, outside of the city in an area where there were many lakes. A lady from the History Department of the University gave us a talk after the main course, on the first people to populate Minnesota – they were from Scandinavia – mainly Swedes. She had copies of letters, which were sent back home to Sweden, telling of his wonderful fertile land, as far as the eye could see and inviting their families and friends to come – plenty of land for everybody. Then, as winter set in, the tone of the letters changed. In spring, the constant howling of cold winds from the north, as they ripped through the log cabins, drove many of the new settlers to insanity and suicide. Some years later, Professor Watts, of Trinity College, Dublin and his wife spoke to me about their experience of Minneapolis, where Professor Watts spent some time. Mrs. Watts said they were four months

there before they saw the colour of the roof of the house they lived in, because of snow. On leaving the airport, I noticed the dreaded eight engine B52 military aircraft, the largest war machine in the world, parked in rows like busses. They were idle, thank God, since the Vietnamese war, and I wished they would stay idle. Alas, they are in use again in the Middle East – mainly in Afghanistan.

Seattle

The following year our delegation went to Seattle on the North West Coast of the USA. Again we were transferred from Washington, after a meeting with Congressmen by military owned aircraft, to a military airfield in Washington State, near the city of Seattle. We were informed that military helicopters would take us to see the devastations caused by the volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helen in 1980. I looked forward to that, as I had an amateur interest in geology. The helicopters were very basic, with hard seats. Ear muffs were supplied to deaden the noise, so conversation was impossible. The helicopters landed near the Mount St. Helen interpretive centre, where we were told that owing to fog on the mountain, they would not fly around for safety reasons. However, the eruption had been filmed and in a small cinema, we were shown the explosion in slow motion. Miraculously only 57 people were killed. The eruption took 1,300 feet off the top. Roughly 0.6 cubic miles was removed by the blast which had a magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale. The velocity of the phyroclastic flow reached 150 miles per hour with temperatures of at least 700 degrees centigrade.

The Governor of Washington State, who was a Scientist, had ordered the evacuation of people from the area some time before the eruption, but some people stayed and regrettably, lost their lives. After our meetings in Seattle, the pilot of the military aircraft, taking us back to Washington was kind enough to fly the plane twice around Mt. St. Helen, so we got an impressive view of the devastation.

In Seattle, we stayed in a hotel, which was then the tallest building west of the Mississippi and we were told the best view was from the ladies toilet on the top floor, so there was a rush of women and men for the ladies loo on the top floor. The view was indeed beautiful, out over the many islands, west of Seattle. Concerns of public representatives here were different again. Timber products and dairy products were of great concern. I had no knowledge of timber business, but when it came to milk, milk products, and beef, I was comfortable handling these issues.

The Opera and the Aircraft

We were guests at the Opera "Carmen" the music of which I love. The words of course meant nothing to me, until that night, when the words of the arias were shown on a screen overhead. It was a wonderful evening. Next day we visited an aircraft museum showing every development from the Wright Brothers to the 747 Jumbo Jet. No Secrets of military aircraft were shown, of course. From the Museum we were taken by bus to the Boeing Aircraft Plant, approximately 20 miles north of Seattle.

The plant covered in excess of 80 acres of roofed space, the largest covered building in the world in cubic space. We were taken in to a film show about Boeing and then the design and assembly of the world's largest passenger aircraft the 747.

My first surprise was that this was really only a plant which assembled the parts of the plane which were made in many parts of the world. The fuselage came from Japan, Rolls Royce engines came from England, parts of the tail came from Belfast, the wings were assembled South of Seattle etc. In fact, transporting the wings from South of Seattle was a huge operation. Transport would start at approximately 4am. With the co-operation of the police, all traffic was blocked from this route until the wings had been transported to the assembly point in the Boeing plant. Co-or-

dination of this operation was all important. In total, there was 6 million parts in the 747, including rivets. Back in the bus, we were driven into the assembly plant. The noise of riveting machines was ear splitting – everyone wore ear muffs and planes at various stages of assembly were moving along on the line after each task was completed. I could scarcely wait to get out of this environment. The sheer size of this assembled plane was awesome and how it climbs into the air, so gracefully, and comes into land so smoothly, never ceases to amaze me.

Surprises in Seattle

To the East of Seattle was a permanently snow-capped mountain, Mount Rainier and to the west of Seattle was Mount Olympus, which had a rain forest. Rain forests are more usually associates with warmer climates nearer to the equator. This was the most northerly rainforest in the world and it had an annual rainfall of approximately 300 inches. One of the great attractions of the city is the open-air fish market in the harbour. There was fish of all shapes and sizes, most of which I had never seen previously. The hustle and bustle in the fish market, with a wide variety of nationalities, was very interesting and amusing to witness, but the haggling over weights and prices was not unlike a fair day in the streets of Athenry.

Change of Government

Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald's coalition Government was voted out of office in 1987 and Ray McSharry MEP was elected as a TD and he resigned from the European Parliament and became Minister for Finance. Fine Gael were low in the polls and to compound our difficulties, Des O'Malley a Fianna Fail TD, set up a new party, the Progressive Democrats.

Tom O'Donnell my MEP colleague, from Munster, resigned from politics, possibly sensing that Munster would not return two MEPs in the 1989 election, or possibly just tired of politics after he had served as TD, Government Minister and MEP. Also he was newly married and perhaps his new wife persuaded him not to run.

The Fine Gael Party, for reasons unknown selected a Nationalist Politician from Northern Ireland, John Cushnahan, to be my running mate in Munster. Having brought him in, they felt obliged to ensure he was elected and as Fine Gael were very low in the polls, I lost out narrowly to him. Naturally, I was very disappointed, but as they say, politics is a cruel sport. However, I was elected to the Irish Senate (Seanad Eireann) just a few months later, a kind of consolation prize, where I served for three years to little effect.

Our Son Thomas

Thomas attended the local Secondary School with very mediocre Intermediate Cert results. The evening his Intermediate results arrived, he disappeared – celebrating with all his pals, of which he had many.

The following morning, it was difficult to get him out of bed. When he came down to breakfast he looked very ill. Breakfast started with porridge. He was just pushing the porridge around and I asked "Is that to be eaten, or has it been eaten already?" He ran for the toilet and his mother began to cry. "The sicker he is now, the better, I said" and true enough, it never happened again. I asked myself what kind of barman gave so much drink to underage boys. They could so easily have smothered in their own vomit. It was illegal to sell drink to such boys, but the practice continued, until the Gardai began to crack down o this trade in later years.

After I was elected to the European Parliament he said to his mother "If there is any money left after the election campaign, I would like to go to boarding school". She replied "Whether there is money or not, you are going, and where would you like to go?" "I would like to go to Ballyfin, where Dad was" he replied. She phoned Ballyfin and again as in my own case, they were full up, but would try to fit him in and so

he arrived in Ballyfin in Sept 1984 after spending five years in the local day school. After the Christmas break when I got back to Strasbourg I phoned home. Thomas's Christmas exam results had arrived that day. The results were very good, so good by comparison with his previous exam results, that I just said, check the name again, believing that there was some mistake. The name was correct. He enjoyed his time in Ballyfin and the food was more plentiful than in my time there. He did not get involved in much in sport apart from indoor soccer, preferring instead to to join the debating team. After two years there he got a good Leaving Certificate and went into UCC to study science. Back in Cork, he reverted to his old ways, socialising, and playing about with a small Apple Computer, which he bought with money from a tax rebate from two summers working in the UK. Later, I found out that he was giving lessons on the computer to other students – for a little fee, of course.

Daughter Mary

While Mary was teaching in Brussels, she met a young man, at a party which Peter Sutherland had organised. She claimed they were the only two people not drinking alcohol at the party, and that was how they met.

The young man was from Ankara, the capital of Turkey. In Turkey, there was a special school for gifted children. His older brother and himself both qualified to attend this school. After graduating from University, the eldest brother got an invitation from the American Embassy to go to do research work in the USA. The following year, when Feza the younger brother qualified, another invitation came from the US Embassy, inviting him to do research work in the USA, and he accepted.

Subsequently he told me how his mother put her head in her two hands weeping – her two sons, her only children were being taken from her. It brought back memories of the American wakes in Ireland.

I felt very strongly about the USA, enticing the best brains from poor countries, to work for US Companies. Peter Barry, from Cork was the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs at that time, and I took this issue up with Peter. He was fully aware of it – saying that if the US wanted somebody from Ireland, Margaret Heckler herself – the USA Ambassador to Ireland, would deliver the invitation, if necessary.

Some years later, I was reliably informed, that at international meetings, on communications, more than 50% of the people representing the USA were not US citizens – they were mainly Indian and Chinese – two of the poorest Countries in the world, were having their best brains poached from them. It was legal, but so unfair, I felt.

Mary's engagement

Following the summer break of 1985 we had expected Mary would come back to University in Ireland, but that did not happen. Mary phoned her mother to say she was getting married and going to live in the USA. To say we were surprised and disappointed was an understatement. Bredhe handled the situation more diplomatically than I would have done, and asked her to phone back in the late evening after she had digested the news.

When I got home and heard this, my world began to crumble and I looked at all the angles – and there was no legal way we could stop a girl of 22 years of age from marrying her boyfriend. Having discussed it with Bredhe, she too agreed that we could not stop her if that was what she wanted to do. When the phone call came in that evening, Bredhe took the call and in a reasonable tone invited the two of them to come to Cork so we could meet Feza. When Mary was in the 2nd level school in Cork, she was very friendly with the youngest daughter of Professor Dennis O'Sullivan, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and a Member of the Governing Body of UCC. In that capacity, I got to know Dennis very well and to admire the manner in which he dealt with stu-

Mary and Feza's wedding February 1986

dents and patients in the teaching hospital. So I got the bright idea to invite Professor Dennis and his wife Joan out to dinner with us and with Mary and Feza.

The dinner was very pleasant, with Dennis having a great chat with Feza, who I put sitting next to him. All in all, it was a good exercise. The following day, I called to see Dennis to get his opinion and advice, bearing in mind the experience Dennis had of working with many nationalities in the Health Service in Britain, before coming back to Cork. "Well, what do you think Dennis?", I enquired. His answer was very frank saying "He is a fine decent young man, and is it not better that she should marry a fine Turkish man, rather than marrying a man, only because he is Irish, who might be a wife beater". "Forget the nationality, concentrate on the personality" said Dennis. Afterwards, I pondered on what Dennis said and how he said it, with the venom I had never associated with his mild manner, and it suddenly dawned on me that Dennis had very probably had seen battered wives, turn at the hospital and, of course, as a Corkman, he would have known many of the husbands of these unfortunate ladies. Wife-beating is not exclusively amongst the poor, it can be found at many levels in all societies, but there are husband beaters too. However, we do not hear much of this, as husbands are ashamed to report it.

Mary's wedding

Mary and Feza were married on the 15th February 1986 in the small but very beautiful Honan Chapel in UCC. Her uncle Ref. Fr. Bill Bennett performed the ceremony.

Feza's parents came and stayed in our house. His mother was an exotic looking beautiful middle aged woman, who suffered mild arthritis. His father had perfect English

and he had worked for many years in the US Embassy in Ankara, the Turkish Capital. Following his retirement, he became an agent for a US Computer Company, Panasonic and he enjoyed developing computer games, which was a very innovative practice in those days. He also wrote crossword puzzles for the newspapers and at 83 years of age is still doing it.

Feza's next posting was to Raleigh in North Carolina in the renowned Research Triangle of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill, working in the fast growing communications business. As Mary had no licence to work, she attended a course for Realtors (what we would call Auctioneers). Having had honours maths in the Leaving Cert., she came first in the examinations, following which offers of work came flooding in, at least three or four in the post each day, but as she was not yet a USA citizen, she could not take up the work.

Chapter 14 – Fota, the end of my involvement

Sale of Lyons and Sale of Fota

The Irish economy in the eighties had serious financial problems. Deputy Ray McSharry TD enforced cutbacks closure of hospitals, sale of public owned properties and of course the Universities did not escape. University College Dublin had no choice but to sell part of Lyons Estate. Michael Smurfit, a wealthy business man bought Lyons House and gardens plus a few hundred acres of land. Very shortly after Mr. Smurfit bought, what became known as the K Club. He developed a great golf course on which the Ryder Cup was played in 2006.

After some years of neglect of Lyons House Mr. Tony Ryan of Ryanair fame, bought Lyons House and gardens and the land from Mr. Smurfit. Tony Ryan spent money lavishly and well in a magnificent restoration of the House and Gardens. Sadly he died a few years later, leaving a Lyons House better than he found it, and having founded Ryanair, which made air travel affordable to the masses. He was buried in the little graveyard in Lyons.

Fota, not surprisingly, came under scrutiny and most of it was sold by the Governing Body to a British Development Company LET (London and Edinburg Trust) who had plans for a golf course and bungalows. The fact that I could not stop the sale, as I was no longer a member of the Governing Body, meant that I could not influence the decision on the sale. Nevertheless, I was blamed and it was a major factor in the loss of my seat in Europe. Leading the group criticising the College in general, and myself in particular, was Richard Wood. He set up a body called Fota Foundation, to save Fota, making a prediction that a hotel would be built in the gardens and acres of woodland would be destroyed. To save Fota he asked for donations. Interestingly, I never heard a word of support from Richard Wood and his pals when I took on the might of the farm lobby, led by T.J. Maher, President of the Irish Farmers Association when I convinced the University to buy it. Neither was there any word of thanks or praise from those who were now castigating me as a traitor to Cork.

What Remained

The House, Courtyard, Gardens, Wildlife Park and the field directly in front of the House were not sold. Furthermore, LET, agreed to pay 50% of the cost of maintaining the Gardens.

A Trust was set up, of which I was appointed Secretary when I was out of the Country and the Chairman was Mr. John Barry, who had won the prize for the best garden in Ireland. I did not know Mr. Barry, who was a qualified dentist. I met Mr. Barry and found him to be a very sincere man, but on gardening his interest was rather limited to flowers and roses.

In public, he expressed a wish to put rose beds in the immediate grassy area adjacent to and in front of the House. Immediately he was attacked by the critics. The College Secretary Mr. Kelleher had a flood of complaints. He phoned me for my opinion and I replied that "I would not do it, but, it's not a tragedy, they could be removed quite easily at minimum cost". John Barry in frustration resigned as Chairman.

I contacted the Director of the National Botanic Gardens and he came to Cork to see me. I suggested he might take the Chair. He had been working in co-operation with Sean O'Donovan for approximately twelve years, so he was very familiar with Fota. He agreed to do so, fo ra temporary period and the other members, including LET, were delighted to have a man of such standing to lead us.

Taisce decided to set the record straight

Taisce Report 1987

The first plantings at Fota date from

about 1825. Since that time many different trees and shrubs have been planted. The collection currently contains about 1,000 different species, varieties and cultivars. Some of the older trees are past their prime and in the near future will decline, ceasing to be attractive specimens and possibly becoming disfigured or diseased. These will pose a serious threat to other plants because of the possibility of collapse in storms. Thus, not only is it necessary to add to the collections, it will also be essential to remove old, unhealthy trees and shrubs, possibly on a large scale; this particular problem is recognized by University College, Cork, and special concern should be paid to the silver firs. Such alterations are imperative to ensure that the general plantings are not damaged – sentimental arguments for the preservation of ALL specimens, irrespective of condition, have no place in good gardening practice anywhere.

In 1980, the Heritage Gardens Committee of An Taisce declared that Fota was a garden of outstanding historical importance and of international interest in its own right. That designation was recognized by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) which is a constituent committee of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and it linked Fota with other equivalent gardens and demesnes in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, and with similar outstanding properties in Great Britain and Western Europe.

The arboretum at Fota is unique in Ireland as it contains one of the richest collections of exotic trees and shrubs in Ireland, the significance of which is greatly enhanced by the fact that planting records survive, documenting the age of many of the individuals. Some of the specimen plants are among the finest of their kind in cultivation in Western Europe, others represent species that are endangered in their wild habitats, and the entire assembly forms not only a garden of great beauty, but also a treasury of botanical and horticultural excellence.

Throughout its period as custodian of the arboretum, the Department of Dairy Husbandry, University College, Cork, has done outstanding work in maintaining the basic fabric of the garden, in enhancing the value of the plant collections, and in restoring areas in the arboretum that had become neglected, overgrown and derelict. Many new species and cultivars have been planted in the arboretum and surrounding parklands by the College, thus continuing the tradition and practice of the original owners of the estate. An Taisce unreservedly congratulates the Authorities of UCC for the care and attention given to the arboretum, for that surely has enriched the Fota Estate and ensured that the arboretum is still of outstanding international significance.

In expressing its anxiety about the future of Fota arboretum, An Taisce wishes to stress some general principles that must be applied in any historic garden, the importance of which largely derives from its collection of living plants.

Fota House

One trouble never comes alone, they say. A section of the beautiful plasterwork in the drawing room collapsed and the Insurance Company insisted that the House be closed to the public. Richard and some of his associates raised hell. Meetings were held, where I was roundly condemned. At one of those meetings, I was wrongly accused of things that never happened, e.g. Felling trees, without permission. A man with heavy rimmed spectacles was really

abusive, telling me that I had destroyed "the lung of Cork". I never saw him in Fota, and I never saw most of the people who were shouting abuse there either. I got up to walk out. Mr. Leslie Atkins, a decent man was chairing the meeting, followed me and persuaded me to come back. I went back and explained the facts which were, of course, very different from the propaganda Richard and friends were spreading.

About a week later, I saw the man, with the glasses who had so abused me, on television, coming out of the Courthouse in Cork, where he had been found guilty of inappropriately filming his female patients, and was stricken off the Medical Register.

Bredhe was watching and she just said that she heard rumours about him. Then I told her he was the ignoramus who was condemning me at the meeting, she rather liked that, and so did I!

A couple of days later, when I arrived home, there was an unstamped envelope in the porch addressed to me. I took it in and it was from a woman who was in 2nd level school with Bredhe, and her husband regularly played squash with me on Sunday mornings.

The letter was so offensive that I tore it up, not wanting Bredhe to see it. This was a step too far and while pondering what to do, I heard that her husband had found one of their sons who was missing, on drugs in Amsterdam. Then I thought to myself that if I had a son in Amsterdam on drugs, I too, might do strange things.

Closure of Fota house

The Insurance Company insisted that Fota House must be closed to the public immediately after the ceiling collapsed. Shortly afterwards a man came in to my office in UCC, introduced himself as O'Doherty from the OPW, and it was about Fota House. "Seal the envelope" he said. "What do you mean by that?" I enquired. "Make sure there is no water entering and we will see what the OPW can do for you later". With that he was off to another appointment. I had the roof thoroughly investigated by a very good small builder, Paddy O'Donovan. He could find no leaks. Two weeks later on the front page of the Cork Examiner, there was a photograph of a collapse of plaster from the dome over the main stairway, accompanied by a tirade about leaking roof by Richard's House Manager. I went to see it, and since she had an apartment over the dome which collapsed, I could not see how it could be a leaking roof. Our usual handyman, Paddy O'Donovan, Builder/Farmer, was doing some work in the coach yard. I asked Paddy to have a look for a leak. He went outside to look up, came in and had a good look – "no roof leak there" said Paddy. "I have to go away for about 20 minutes, maybe you could find where the water came from", I said.

When I came back Paddy was sitting on the stairs and water was dripping down through the hole in the hole in the plasterwork. "Where in the hell is that from?" I asked. "Follow me" said Paddy and up to the next floor and into the housekeeper's apartment. He put a plug in the wash hand basin, turned on the tap and shortly the water overflowed, down on to the floor and down through the hole in the plasterwork over the stairs. He turned off the tap, pulled the plug and just turned and said "sue the bitch". "I can't, I said, because you entered her apartment, without permission". "Right, said Paddy, I will turn off the supply to her apartment". "No Paddy, you can't, she has two children. I will just put up a notice to turn off all taps". Paddy put up some scaffolding to prevent further falls of plaster, which might hit somebody on the head. She got the message about the taps, but then had a photograph on the Examiner, complaining about the difficulty of getting up and down due to scaffolding – front page again.

New Chairman for Fota Trust

In 1991 Aidan Brady announced that he

would soon resign as Chairman. All those present, including the LET representative were saddened to hear this. He was adamant, so we had to accept it. He asked for suggestions for a new Chairman.

I have no idea how I suddenly thought of Professor Watts, Provost of Trinity College, in Dublin. "He is retiring shortly, I said and he was a former Professor of Botany and Richard Wood is a graduate of Trinity". The members were unanimous that we should invite him and Aidan and myself were delegated to go to see him, and the meeting ended.

Aidan and I arranged a date and I went to Dublin and after a cup of coffee, near Trinity College, we set out for No. 1 Grafton Street, the most prestigious address in Dublin, and residence of the Provost and his family. The door bell was answered, a woman opened the door, we gave our names and asked if we could see Professor Watts. She invited us in, offered us tea or coffee, saying he will be back shortly. Very shortly he came in. I had never met the man, but Aidan, as Director of the National Botanic Gardens was known to him. Aidan put the proposal to him that he might chair Fota Trust, and he replied "he needed time to think about it".

I checked back with him a couple of weeks later and to my delight, he agreed. Afterwards, he told me that it was his wife Gerry, who convinced him to take it, as it would be a nice interest for him in his retirement. Following his appointment, he was bombarded by Richard Wood with letters. Bill replied to Richard, that if he would write a letter every two months, rather than two letters every week, he would reply, but he was not going to reply to all of these letters from Richard. Bill took up the Chairmanship and Aidan stopped attending. I made some enquiries and to my great regret, I heard Aidan was terminally ill with cancer, so that explained why he suddenly wanted to vacate the Chair of Fota Trust.

Aidan died very shortly afterwards. I went to his funeral, which was a very dignified affair, but I was unknown to most people there. He was pre-deceased by his wife, who came from Glanmire village, just east of Cork City. Sean was devastated by the death of his great friend. I had a plaque erected to his honour in Fota. Some of his family colleagues and friends, including Sean attended the simple ceremony.

A new manager of LET came over to see me and to inform me that they were not going to honour their commitment to pay half the cost of operating the gardens. I replied "you have a legal commitment to honour" and he just replied, "I know, but I guess if it goes to court I have more fire-power than you", which of course, he had. "We will find that out in court, I replied" and let him think about it.

My bit of bluff worked. A couple of weeks later, I had a letter from him, offering £330,000 to buy out their legal commitment. I contacted the Chairman Professor Watts and he was not very impressed, saying "I will consult the Finance Officer in Trinity, Mr. Winkleman" and I replied saying, "I know he will tell you take it and run".

The next day I had a call from Bill Watts and laughing he said "Winkleman said take it and run". I wrote to the LET and accepted the offer.

That money helped to keep the Trust afloat, with some help from the two Local Authorities, who were members of the Board of the Trust. Meantime, a full examination of the House was carried out by John Cahill; Architect from the OPW, with occasional help from some of his technical staff, such as Quantity Surveyors, Structural Engineers and a young lady Susan Seager, daughter of a colleague when we were students in the Albert College. When we knew the scale of the costs, it was abundantly clear that we could not complete the work without a very substantial outside grant.

Bord Fáilte (Tourist Board)

Bord Fáilte was contacted and they sent information and an application form. At that time, I was a member of the Higher Education Authority and there was an Accountant, Malachy Stephens, on it and he also had some connection with Bord Fáilte.

Malacy helped me in making the application, but alas we had to find £500,000 for "matching funds". The money from LET was largely exhausted. In a last chance, I went to a Mr. Brendan Scully in the OPW. Brendan was very sympathetic, but he would need the approval of Junior Minister Sheila DeValera and she would not be back in the country before the closing date for the application. "Ah, to hell with it", said Brendan, "I will sign it" and off I went to deliver it to Bord Fáilte, just in time. The fact that the OPW would supervise the work, free of charge, was a big plus. A gentleman, named Mr. Jordan, came to Fota from Bord Fáilte for a general look at the House and Gardens. No questions were asked and no comments were offered. The grant was awarded. Mr. Jordan arrived again to see the House after the work was finished. He told me that he was being transferred to hotel inspection work and sure enough, I saw his name on Bord Fáilte documents on the back of many hotel bedroom doors, afterwards.

Richard Wood's Furniture and Paintings.

After the closure of the House, Fota Trust became concerned about Richard's property, particularly the paintings, which might be damaged by dampness, with all the windows and window shutters closed. Lord Killanin convened a meeting in Government Buildings, to discuss the issue. Professor Watts and myself represented Fota Trust and Richard had Mr. Ansley from North Cork with him. Dr. Maurice Craig, an Art Historian, also attended. The first meeting was fruitless, with Richard going over his grievances again. Dr. Craig just listened and said nothing. The meeting was a waste of time. Lord Killanin suggested we meet again and a date was agreed.

At the next meeting, Richard in great glee announced he had a solution – my spirits lifted. "I met President Robinson and she is prepared to take them in the Aras". Immediately Dr. Craig retorted "The President does not decide what hangs in the Aras, the OPW decides that, and I doubt if the OPW would run the risk of embarrassing our President by having the Sherriff's van call to the front door some morning". There was a stunned silence and then Lord Killanin just said "Oh quite so, quite so - any other business", there was no reply. The meeting was over in a matter of minutes.

Professor Watts and I retired to the Shelbourne Hotel, which is not too far from Government Buildings. Over coffee, he suggested that he would go to the National Gallery, to ask if Richard's paintings could be stored in the Gallery. The Director knew professor Watts over many years and he was willing to help. He promised to send a man to examine the paintings and to bring him back a report.

The man duly arrived, examined the paintings carefully and departed without making any comments. Subsequently the Director phoned Professor Watts saying yes, they would store the paintings on condition that they Trust would insure the paintings, and that the Trust would pay for the packing and transport of the paintings. The Trust agreed and Richard agreed. Shortly afterwards when Professor Watts was on a visit to Fota, I got a phone call from Paddy Walsh the head Gardener and in an excited voice reported that there was a truck outside Fota House into which the paintings were being transferred. I told him to inform the Garda Station in Cobh. In the meantime, Professor Watts managed to get Richard on the phone. Richard was very excited, saying Professor Edward Walsh; President of Limerick University is willing to hang them in the University of Limerick. Professor Watts was a very calm man, but on this occasion I saw him very angry. I phoned Paddy Walsh again to explain the situation to the Garda, and frankly I was

The Examiner
Saturday, October 30, 1999
Property
Ireland's best guide for people on the move

Castles in the air

Ex-pilot Richard Good-Stephenson restores Cor Castle in Innishannon, Co Cork, using traditional methods, naturally.
Page 18

Not to be missed

A dream housing development is about to take off in Rochestown, Cork. Prices start at £205,000.
Page 2

Wild about children

Making plans: Examining the plans for the refurbishment of Fota House, Cork, (from left), Kevin Mulcahy, director, Fota Trust; David Bird, director, Fota Trust; John Cahill, Architect, Office of Public Works; Tom Raftery, secretary, Fota Trust and Gerard O'Callaghan, county architect. Picture: John Sheehan Photography

Return to splendour

very relieved to have no further responsibility for these very valuable pieces of art. The furniture and caretaker Tina Neylon, were still in the House.

Fota Gardens and Aboretum

Professor Watts was at various times an advisor to the OPW on the development of National Parks such as Killarney National Park in Kerry and Glenveagh in Co. Donegal. Needless to say, he spoke to them regularly about the Arboretum and Gardens in Fota.

In 1996 John Mahony and John McCarthy, Commissioners in the OPW, in the presence of Professor Watts and myself, in the Golf Club House on the new Fota Golf Course, signed an agreement transferring the Arboretum and Gardens into the care of the State. It was a beautiful summer day, made all the more beautiful in the knowledge that the famous Arboretum and Gardens were safe into the future.

Sean O'Donovan RIP

Sadly my wonderful colleague and friend had died a few months earlier in January 1996, having done Trojan work in the 20 years during which he cared

for the gardens. I wrote his Obituary, part of which stated:

> *"His most enduring legacy, however, will be his great work in the restoration of the world-renowned Arboretum and the establishment of Fota Wildlife Park. With the help of the late Aidan Brady and Dr. Charles Nelson of the National Botanic Gardens, he undertook, with his usual enthusiasm, the very onerous and difficult task of identifying, cataloguing and labelling all the trees and shrubs in Fota Arboretum and Gardens.*
>
> *Since 1975 until his sudden death, he sourced, with the help of the Office of the Public Works, the Na-*

tional Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, and many other plant collections –both public and private – an extraordinary range of exotic material which he successfully established in Fota. A glance at the Fota Catalogue showed that Sean had planted as much in 20 years, as had been planted in the previous 200 years".

I had a plaque erected in his honour, adjacent to Aidan Brady's plaque.

Restoration of Fota House

Now that we had money for restoration, five companies were short listed and invited by the OPW to tender. The tenders were in before 15th December 1999. I requested Richard to remove his furniture, but Richard argued that the furniture could be stored at one end of the House, which restoration was in progress at the other end and then shift it to the restored part of the House.

In frustration, I wrote to Richard, saying if he did not remove the furniture, "we would re-locate it". A few days later, when I was shopping in Cork, my phone rang – a secretary just said "the President wants to speak to you". President Wrixon came on the phone – loud, clear and angry about my letter to Richard saying "I'm speaking to you as President" "OK, carry on, I said", I got a tirade of criticism and I just told him the furniture had to be removed or we would lose the restoration money and switched off my cell phone. I went back to College and drafted a letter to the President (see over).

There was no reply from President Wrixon. Professor Watts agreed that the Trust would pay for the storage of the furniture, for one year in Nat Ross's Stores.

The Fota Trust Company Limited

Mimosa House, Fota Island, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork

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Agriculture Department,
University College,
Cork.

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22 November 1999

Professor G.T. Wrixon,
President,
U.C.C.

Dear President,

I would like to update you in relation to the restoration of Fota House, as follows:-

1. Bord Fáilte have agreed, in principle, to give a grant of £1,578,878.
2. Duchas has agreed to give £500,000.
3. AIB has agreed a bridging loan of £500,000.
4. OPW has agreed to supervise and manage the project to its conclusion. OPW services are free of charge.
5. Cork Corporation and Cork County council have agreed to underwrite any losses, which may occur, after opening, for a period of 10 years.
6. National Museum has agreed, in principle, to give material on loan.
7. Five companies were short listed and have been invited by OPW to tender. The tenders will be in before 15 December 1999.

In order to proceed with the work the contractor will require complete vacant possession - see enclosed letter. Tina Neylon and Richard Wood have got copies of this letter, on 29 October and 5 November, and have been requested by Fota Trust to give vacant possession not later than 1 February 2000. Failure to comply or public controversy could undermine the whole project.

In that regard I am very concerned by the letter from Patrick Annesley, Richard's friend, in to-days Irish Times, 22 November. Public controversy will almost certainly cause Bord Failte not to give full approval. Likewise bodies such as Duchas, OPW, National Museum and the tow Local Authorities would be less than happy to be involved, if Fota, once again, becomes embroiled in controversy.

Yours sincerely,

T.F. Raftery
Secretary
Fota Trust Co. Ltd.

Telefax
To: Prof. W.A Watts
Fax:
From: Tom Raftery
Pages: 1
Date: 22/11/99

W.A. Watts *(Chairman)*, T.F. Raftery *(Secretary)*, John A.D. Bird, Liam Burke, Cormac Foley, Kevin Mulcahy

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Letter to UCC president Gerry Wrixon

Chapter 15 - Bredhe's decline

Pig producers co-op and crisis at home.

West Cork was the centre of pig production in the 60s and 70s. Almost every farmer produced pigs but not on the industrial scale that we see now, similar to egg production or chicken production.

West Cork farmers were very unhappy with the prices they were getting. In 1967 a public meeting was arranged in Drimoleague to which Paddy O' Keefe, editor of the Farmers Journal, and myself and a few others whose names I cannot recall, were invited. Paddy O'Keefe contacted me and invited me to join him in a meal in Cork and offered to do the driving. We met for a meal and we were still at the meal when we were due to be at the meeting.

Paddy was notorious for being late for appointments. When we got to the meeting there was a full house of angry farmers. Paddy promptly appointed himself chairman and the main complaints with the prices they were getting from the pig buyers.

I said my piece about methods of production, pig health etc and then looked at a very vociferous an angry man in the second row and suggested they form a pig producers co-op, as they had no leverage as individuals. Immediately the angry man shot back saying "we will, if you put the college pigs in with us." "Of course I will", I said, and there and then the storm subsided.

Before the meeting was over a number of leaders offered to meet to form the co-op and I was invited to join the group. A date was set and the venue was agreed, in the village of Rosscarbery which was adjacent to most producers except myself. However, I overlooked that.

During the first meeting it was agreed that the chairman and secretary should be elected. I was the unanimous choice to take the chair, which I did. On taking the chair I informed them that I only took the chair to help them set up a committee. "You will have to do this yourselves and I will get you help to do so, if necessary." I asked for a proposal for secretary and a young man named Fachtna O'Callaghan was elected. At the next meeting they had already agreed on a name for chairman, a Florence McCarthy.

Fachtna wrote to all the bacon factories giving the number of pigs produced each year, by the members of Carberry Pig Producers Co-op. He invited the pig processors to have a reliable supply of pigs, rather than dealing with individual page buyers. Fachtna sought prices from a range of processors, including Lunhams in Cork city, Cappoquin bacon factory in Co Waterford etc. Cappoquin became so reliant on the supply from Carberry producers that Carberry drove prices up until Cappoquin went bankrupt. Other buyers over time included Hanleys of Cavan and the bacon was selling back again in Cork.

My former student Denis Brosnan, who managed Kerry Co-op, subsequently the Kerry group, bought Denny's bacon factory and Carberry Co-op supplied pigs to Denny's.

In the meantime, UCC bought Fota in 1975 and sold Bishopstown farm, including the piggeries, so I was out of Carberry Co-op, which was, by then, a very successful Co-op. In 1997 Bredhe and I were invited to a function in the new hotel in Rosscarbery to celebrate the 30th birthday of the Co-op.

It was in December and the weather was wet and windy. I phoned from College and booked a room in the hotel, as I did not relish the idea of driving home late in such weather. I then phoned Bredhe to tell her I had booked a room and suggested she should pack some nightclothes and suitable clothes for the function.

For some reason I got home earlier than usual. She came down the stairs looked at me, clasped her head in both hands and hit the floor, without a word or warning sign. She was deeply unconscious, making a

snoring sound while breathing deeply.

I phoned her doctor Tim O'Toole and my son Thomas. They both came very quickly. As he saw her on the floor Tim said "Call this phone number" which I did. I then handed him the phone and he talked to the ambulance driver who by good luck was close by, on his way back to the hospital. Thomas went out on the road to direct the ambulance to the house.

When it arrived a man in a white coat stepped in, took a look at the scene and called his colleague who came in with a stretcher bed and they were gone in just a couple of minutes. I phoned our daughter Mary in the USA and then Thomas drove me to the hospital. Mary travelled overnight from Seattle and she arrived next day. Bredhe remained deeply unconscious.

When Mary arrived via London to Cork, Thomas met her and brought her straight to the hospital. Bredhe was sedated and in a deep sleep. There was an Indian doctor on duty. He put the x-rays up to view. The x-rays–from front to back, side to side and top to bottom showed blood everywhere. Suddenly, two nurses rushed to catch Mary as she fainted. The doctor said the bleeding has stopped and walked away.

The nurses, very kindly lay Mary on a couch and got her a drink of water. They then advised that she should go home to get asleep, as they knew she travelled overnight and so we went home, in a state of shock.

Meanwhile Carberry Co-op had a great night and my old student Dennis Brosnan was there. I phoned to explain why I could not attend and that was my last contact with the Co-op.

The Operation

The following day, on a Monday morning maybe, Thomas and myself went into the hospital. Bredhe was still sedated, and been scanned by the most modern equipment.

Dr Ted Buckley, an experienced neurosurgeon came out to see me, saying "I am leaving this operation to a younger and better trained man" who he introduced as Dr Marks an Englishman. Dr Marks, with the aid of x-rays explained what he would do. He was so confident and kind that we were now more at ease.

He took us to the hospital canteen for a coffee. He had a degree in history, before studying medicine. After marrying, his wife and himself took a cycling holiday in West Cork and they loved everything - the scenery, the people, the food etc etc. Back in London he noticed an advertisement for a neurosurgeon in Cork and he applied. And now he was very happy in Cork and his children were in the same schools that Mary and Thomas attended. Then he was off back to work. We were comforted by the confidence and kindness of this new man in Cork.

The operation went well, but they subsequently had difficulty in stabilising potassium levels in Bredhe's blood. From my livestock training I knew how that could prove fatal.

Mary had returned to her young family for the Christmas. Thomas, still single, moved back home to lend some support.

Christmas storm

On Christmas Eve we had one of the worst storms in living memory, on the south coast of Ireland. At one stage 110,000 homes were without electricity. Gusts of up to 100 mph broke powerlines despite the best efforts of the ESB, 60,000 households were still without electricity, water and telephones. Over 1,000 electricity poles broke in the high winds.

40 emergency ESB crews came south from Donegal, Sligo, Cavan and Athlone. Cork, Shannon, Farranfore and Waterford airports were forced to close. In Cork city Cash's store had to close, on Christmas Eve, as part of the glass dome collapsed.

I dreaded what I would find in Fota. It was impossible to drive up the avenue there. At least 10 large beech trees were felled across the front Avenue. The wonderful Cedar of Lebanon at the back of the house, planted in 1815, was felled. The car park area was like a battlefield with mature trees felled across every pathway.

Trees fell on the perimeter fence of the wildlife park, but no animals attempted to escape–they were too scared to stir.

Fortunately the hospital had its own back-up emergency power supply.

Bredhe survived the operation but she was blind in one eye, and while there was sight in the other eye, she could only open the eye by using her hand to lift the eyelid. Her brother Ted brought their mother to see Bredhe, it was the first and only time I had ever seen the woman show any emotion. It was also the only time I had ever seen her with nothing to say. She just sat there, not knowing what to say, just fingering the rosary beads in silence. Just what was going through the mind of this 94-year-old woman looking at her 63-year-old daughter, I could not guess.

OPW

The OPW had taken the gardens into its care just 15 months earlier, and was now faced with a mammoth task. An aerial photograph showed a scene like a battlefield. It also gave the best idea of where to start the clean up. The first priority was to clear the avenue to the house and then progressively open all the other roads and pathways because there were so many trees felled. There was no market for the timber as all the saw mills were flat out trying to collect and cut up fallen trees.

Somebody sourced a contractor who had a mobile saw which could cut tree trunks up to 20 inches in diameter into boards of whatever depth you wished for. He worked week after week cutting boards and fencing posts, but the larger trees, including the Cedar of Lebanon, which had a diameter of 96 inches posed an entirely different problem.

This saw could deal with the limbs of the great Cedar, but not the trunck. With chainsaws we managed to cut a ring of the main truck about 6 inches in depth. This was put into storage in the old courtyard. The stump and roots were buried adjacent to where the great trees stood for over 150 years. Its absence completely changed the landscape.

Cormac Foley of the OPW sourced a new Cedar of Lebanon roughly 12 feet high in Belgium. Initially, it thrived but then it died. On examination, a wound was found near the base and disease had set in there. He got another replacement which is thriving and hopefully future generations will see the tree as magnificent as the one felled in 1997 but that will be a long, long time, at least another 100 years.

Transplanting

When the felled trees had been cut up and the roots buried, I got an idea which I put to Cormac Foley. About 15 years earlier, Shaun O'Donovan, planted a grove of young trees on the northwest side of the gardens to provide more shelter in the future for the Arboretum.

These trees were now up to 20 feet tall and ready to be thinned to allow the remainder to mature. I suggested to Cormac that we could transplant some of them into areas where mature trees fell in the storm. Cormac had a good look and he was like a child who would found a lost toy.

I know where I can get a machine to transplant them, he said. The machine arrived; Cormac selected the trees and the sites to where they should be transplanted. The machine was specifically designed for transplanting.

Three very large diamond-shaped spades commenced to lift about a quarter ton of soil with the tree roots. It was then transferred to a hole which had already been

made by the same spades in the sites selected by Cormac. In a few years there was no evidence of the storm damage. The trees which were not felled by the storm, are examined every year by a tree surgeon. He cuts off any dead or damaged limbs, to avoid any injury to visitors or their cars.

Eye Surgeon

At the hospital I was advised to take Bredhe to the eye surgeon, Dr. Cleary, who visited the hospital on certain days. I took her in the wheelchair to see him. He just looked into each eye with some kind of little light. "Your eyes are healthy", he said. She replied, "I have no sight in my left eye". "I know that", he said, and then, "Next patient!"

I wheeled her back to the bed where she wept bitterly. A kind nurse comforted her saying, he has a terrible manner but he is a renowned eye specialist and he will see you again after you leave hospital and so that transpired.

An appointment was made and I took her to his private clinic where there were a number of people waiting to see him. When she was called, I went into his clinic with her. He pulled on the blinds, turned down the lights and lowered a chart with letters. The good eye was ok, but the left eye could scarcely see the chart. Again he checked with a torch and pronounced the eyes were healthy.

"Will I get sight back in my left eye?" she asked. "You will", he said. "When?" she asked. "I can't foretell that". In trying to make conversation she said, "I believe you saw me in the hospital, but I can't remember it". "I remember it well", he said, "and to tell you the God's truth, I thought you would never get out of it. See my secretary on the way out". In other words, pay up. The secretary was kind and she gave us another date to see him again.

The next time we went back, Bredhe noticed some excellent paintings in the waiting room. Art and the history of art was her life-long passion. On entering to see Dr. Cleary she just casually mentioned the lovely paintings and the man's personality transformed completely.

He opened the blinds, turned up the lights and the two of them discussed the artists and the paintings in his waiting room. It was the most extraordinary instant change of personality I had ever seen. Eventually he examined the eye and joyfully announced, "the eye will be 90% as good as it was before". He saw us to the door, shook hands and wished us good bye.

I could see his secretary smiling from ear to ear and she then said, "You admired his paintings". I never met him again, but on making inquiries, I was assured that he was an internationally renowned eye surgeon.

Shortly afterwards I met a member of Fota Island Golf Club on the train to Dublin. His name was John Roche, an accountant, and I had known him long before the golf course in Fota was developed.

John was a regular player in Fota every week. But then, I didn't see him for a few months. I asked John about his absence, and he informed me that he had lost most of the sight in one eye, "but it is okay now", he said. Naturally after the experience with Bredhe's loss of sight, I asked him, how he got the sight back.

"Do you know Mr. Cleary, the eye surgeon", he inquired, and I assured him I did. John was advised by his GP to go to see Mr. Cleary. Mr. Cleary said, he would have to have a little operation and that the operation was very successful.

John was curious to know what kind of operation he had performed and Mr. Cleary just replied, "I had to take out your eye and do a little stitching at the back". I looked at John in amazement, and asked, "Would you have gone in for the operation if you'd known beforehand that he would be taking out your eye?" John replied, "No way, no way. I'd run a mile from him, but now I am grateful. I can forgive the man on the rude-

ness he exhibited".

I told John of our experience and John laughed saying, "I'll remember to admire the paintings if I get in trouble with the other eye."

Bredhe's Recovery

Bredhe's recovery was very slow. Roughly six months later, her brother Bill, the priest, died. It was a terrible blow for her, she was very close to him. She was unable to go to the funeral in Kilkenny. I traveled with Thomas to attend the funeral mass and returned immediately after the mass was celebrated as the woman who was with Bredhe had to leave early. A few days later the doorbell rang.

I opened the door and there was her now 96-year-old mother, and as she entered the house in a loud voice she said, "there's to be no tears while I am in this house". I was very tempted to say, "Would you ever feck off back to Kilkenny?" but she was accompanied by her son, Ted, the farmer. Ted is a truly wonderful man as a son, brother-in-law, farmer, and neighbor in Ballasala.

Bredhe's mother came from a large family. I knew one of her brothers, Mick, a creamer manager, a very kind and softhearted man. It was the family where the sons died in their 70s and the women in their 90s, but she was now 96 and apart from the deafness she was in the best of health.

Like all deaf people she spoke very loudly and Bredhe heard what she said coming in the door, which immediately set off a bout of weeping.

I made the tea telling her that Bredhe was sleeping giving a week to Ted. All in all, it was a bad evening and we didn't see her again until her hundredth birthday 28 months later.

The Big Birthday

It was Bredhe's mother's 100th birthday. Bredhe was now much better, so we traveled to Kilkenny and stayed in a quiet guesthouse the night before.

In the morning Mass was celebrated at the local church in Johnswell followed by a meal in the Parish Hall just beside the church.

A letter from the then President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, was read out, and the cheque from the President was presented to her by the Mayor of Kilkenny.

She reveled in it, but I could see Bredhe was wilting. She asked me to take her back to the old home to rest. I had a word with Ted, he gave me the keys to the house and we left quietly.

Shortly afterwards she realised that she had left a few items in the hall and asked me to go back to get them. When I went back the dance was now in full swing with local musicians providing the music for an old time waltz.

There was no sign of granny in her seat. I looked around, and there she was on the dance floor. "My God!" I thought, "How unfair life can be. Her son dead, Bredhe at death's door and the 100-year-old widowed granny for 34 years on the dance floor". I wondered what God was up to, indeed I wondered if there was any God.

15 months later the family put granny into a nursing home against her will, because her daughter-in-law, who suffered from arthritis, was no longer able to mind her.

Ever since her sight deteriorated she had a radio in the pocket and earphones on. If you wanted to know who got married or who died or who won the hurling matches, she had all the answers.

Her eldest daughter, Margaret, who was a widow since 1986 and lived in Boyle, County Roscommon, called to the nursing home to see her. They walked in the corridors, Margaret inquired about the sitting room, to which Granny replied, "I wouldn't go in there, it's full of auld wans, with their heads down asleep".

On the Wednesday before the Hurling All-Ireland in which Kilkenny were playing, the family were called in to the home, as it seemed she was dying. As they were saying prayers for the dying, she woke up, saying, "if you think I am going anywhere before the All-Ireland match on Sunday, forget it. And If I die on Sunday I want the flag on the coffin and 'The Rose of Mooncoin' sung in the church". They went home rather humbled.

On Sunday they went in again and had a television set in her bedroom. Kilkenny won the match and they went home to milk the cows. Approximately three hours later a phone call came from the nursing home informing them that she had died peacefully and happy.

Ted phoned to let us know the news and as the mass and burial would be on Tuesday, but we decided to travel on Monday. During that Sunday night I was woken by a sudden noise in the bedroom. On switching on the light I found Bredhe on the floor, with blood coming from a cut over her eye.

"What happened?" I inquired. She replied, "I fell out of bed and hit my face on the top of the cabinet". Since the cabinet was taller than the bed, that was impossible. Subsequently the neurologist confirmed that it was a blackout that she got after getting out of the bed.

In the morning her face was like somebody who had had a bout with Muhammad Ali. With the aid of dark glasses and facial makeup she looked a little better.

The Bishop of Ossory attended the mass, which went on-and-on - he turned to me saying, "Will this ever finish?"

The coffin was draped in the Kilkenny flag and 'The Rose of Mooncoin' was sung in the church, and again in the graveyard where she was interred with her husband and her son Father Bill. Stories were told about shopping in Kilkenny City at the age of a 100 years still looking for bargains and style.

Following the funeral, Ted was going through some of her contents. He found a timber box in which, was found various items they had never heard of, including notes from the former leader of Fianna Fáil and former president, Éamon de Valera.

One note was dated and the exact wording was, "Dear Kitty, memorise the following and destroy it."

She had been dispatch carrier and Kitty being Kitty, saved up all little messages she carried during the fight for freedom and the Civil War. Our son, Thomas, put them all on one background and framed them under glass. Like many households, family loyalties were divided. As far as I could assess her husband was not a Fianna Fáil supporter.

My father was deeply involved with Paddy Hogan and Fine Gael. His brother on his home farm was a rabid Fianna Fáil man, as was his son. I think it was Yeats who said, "The Irish are very fair-minded people, they never speak well of each other."

In the European parliament I heard Sir Fred Catherwood, a Northern Ireland Protestant, say the Irish are the kind of people who when they see a fight, inquire, "Is this a private matter or can anyone join in?"

Well, Kitty let us know regularly which side she was on until the news of Mr. Haughey using for himself, money that was collected for Brian Lenihan's liver transplant. After that political discussion was off the agenda.

Her sisters lived well into their 90s and one of them lost her husband in 1957 on the day I had my first date with Bredhe. She lived in small house in the city alone after all the family were gone. When Kilkenny were playing she locked the door, took the phone off the hook, lit a cigarette and concentrated on the match, a true Kilkenny supporter and we wonder why Kilkenny just keep on winning.

As a former famous soccer manager, Bill Shankey, in England said, when asked was

soccer a religion with him? He said, "No, it's more important than that". I think there was a touch of that spirit in my in-laws too when it came to hurling.

Seattle Again

In 1995 Mary and family moved to Washington State. They lived about 20 miles from Seattle in a neat little town called Woodinville. Hardly surprising given that virtually the whole area was forested.

The predominant tree was the Western Red Cedar. A tree that produced very durable wood and every house in the area was constructed from this timber. Fota Arboretum has a number of these trees, one of them was planted by the U.S. ambassador in Ireland, a Mr. Shannon.

There was a straight line, where the trees were felled all the way into the city. I inquired about this and was told that the water main supplying the city was buried under this cutting. It was a wonderful amenity for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riding, no vehicles were allowed to use it.

The neighbors next to Mary's family had a horse farm and Mary regularly helped to exercise the horses on this very safe path.

Her husband, Feza, a computer expert, worked in an unmarked building in Woodinville and was forbidden to disclose what he worked at. I can only surmise that his work was related to the U.S. forces or the CIA. Clearly he had a good job and Mary did little work as a realtor, but as most of this work in buying and selling houses occurred at the weekend Feza encouraged her to give it up and go back to the University. She went on to complete a degree in Law.

The climate in Washington State varied from 150 inches of rain in the rainforest west of Seattle to less than 5 inches east of the Cascade Mountains in the eastern part of the State.

Woodinville's climate was a little warmer in summer and a fair bit cooler in winter than Cork. In part of Washington State, there was a small winery, so there is quite a variety of climates in the State.

The world's largest computing company, Microsoft, was close by employing thousands of workers, and as we drove into Seattle we crossed a low-level bridge from which we could get a glimpse of the house of the Founder Bill Gates, one of the richest men in the world.

There were all sorts of rumors about the security Mr. Gates had to avoid having his young son kidnapped. Personally, I preferred my own standard of living to the kind that Mr. Gates had to endure.

Carnation Herd

While out driving about one day I noticed a sign for the Carnation Dairy Farm. Carnation dairy products, especially dried milk, would have been familiar to most people. For me the big interest was to see the world-famous dairy farm. I followed pointed arrows on the surface of the side road until I reached the car park in the dairy farm.

There were no guides, just signposts to the farmyard. I saw some calves but no cows, no office, no guides just signposts. There was a photograph of a Friesian cow, very large cow, judging by the size of the man leading her.

He name was Possum Sweetheart. She had a world record yield of milk in one year, a massive 37,361 pounds (at a time when an average cow produced 4000). The names of famous people who came to see her were listed. Amongst the visitors listed was Jack Dempsey, the former world heavyweight champion boxer who actually tried to milk her. No dates, no further information. Closed was the sign on the information office. Thehe photo was taken sometime in the 1920s.

Further on was a most interesting photo of 42 heifer calves born from one cow in one

year by means of over-harvesting from the famous cow and implanting the fertilized ova in other cows.

To get 42 heifers, they probably harvested over a hundred ova as 50% would be male and many ova would not survive. I was aware of such work as one of the leaders of such work was Professor Ian Gordon, a Scotsman working in the faculty of Agriculture in University College, Dublin.

When Ian retired from the faculty of Agriculture, he was immediately invited to work for a leading maternity hospital in Dublin. No doubt he helped many women with their infertility problems. Now 42 calves from one cow in one year was something I could not explain to my grandchildren then aged nine years and five years.

In any case, they were far more interested in the few live calves they saw in pens. I was intent on visiting again next year but we never got back to Seattle due to Bredhe's serious downturn in health. During the three visits we made to Washington State, we visited the islands. There was a University College Cork graduate in Medicine in one of the islands whose name I cannot recall.

We visited Snoqualmie waterfalls, a 268-foot waterfall visited by over a million visitors per year. There was a small electricity generating facility driven by water piped down to the turbines and many other beautiful and interesting areas.

Boeing Again

During one of the three visits to Seattle, Mary drove Bredhe and myself up to the Boeing plant. A tour for visitors had just started and we were given the time of the next tour. We walked to a coffee shop in a little village and on the way saw a big sign, '$50 Fine for Spitting on the Sidewalk' which initially I laughed at, but Mary reminded me that it was to rid the habit of spitting out chewing gum. The fine for littering and spitting were effective in every city I visited in the USA.

"It's high time we introduce such laws in Ireland" I said, as the streets in every town and city in Ireland were and still are littered with chewing gum and paper. Cleaning the streets helps but a fine for littering would be much more effective and it could be a revenue source.

When we got back for the next tour in Boeing, we were taken into a small cinema, which gave us all the information about Boeing and the manufacture of the new twin-engine jumbo jets.

I felt it was very scary to rely on two engines for these monsters, but subsequently it had an excellent safety record, the Boeing 777 series.

One other item of information I discovered was that the black box which records all the data of the flight, was in the rear end of the plane. I had always assumed it would be upfront where all the flight speeds, etcetera, were on display. The reason given was that it had a much better chance of surviving impact at the rear end in the event of a crash. And the information from the black box is vitally important to establish why planes crash or get into some other troubles.

Washington State

Washington State is notable not just for Boeing, the rainforest, Starbucks coffee, and Microsoft. It was the 11th largest producer of agricultural products, which in value were the seventh highest in the USA.

Livestock ranked highest in value but was also a very large producer of horticultural produce including apples, sweet corn, apricots, grapes, prunes, cherries, plums, barley (for brewing), and wheat.

They had seven state universities and 20 private universities as well as 30 community colleges. Finally, they had some of the best sea fishing grounds and wonderful rod line fishing with all the streams and rivers from the Cascades and the other mountains. If I were to live in the

USA, Washington State would be my first choice.

Our Last Holiday

In the summer of 2005 our son and his Spanish wife, Pilar, invited us to holiday with them in Cadiz where her family rented an apartment each year, usually in August, the hottest month of the year in Seville.

Cadiz is on the coast so it enjoys the cooling breeze from the Atlantic. They invited us to go with them but we delayed in making up our minds with the result that Pilar could only get a full suite in the Parador Atlantica, which we accepted. Bredhe's health was by now very fragile to say the least of it.

For that reason I booked a room in a small hotel in Malaga where we could rest before the drive to Cadiz in a the hired car. I picked up the rental car at the airport and asked the taxi driver to go ahead of me to the hotel. The taxi driver drove like a lunatic and I took many risks to keep in sight of him. His charge however was very reasonable by Irish standards so I quickly forgot the stress he had put me through.

The hotel was nice, very friendly and with excellent English. After Bredhe rested, she wished to see the cathedral, which she was informed was very large and impressive. The hotel porter gave me a little map and we set out walking. As we approached to the main square near the cathedral we heard Flamenco music, rounding a corner and into the square we saw the beautiful Flamenco dress and Flamenco dancing.

Male Flamenco dancers would peel off occasionally from the parade and pick a girl from the audience and do a few twirls and then continue on. Bredhe with red hair, blue eyes and very white skin became an exotic, magnetic attraction for many of the men who invited her to dance but she was unable. Had it been ten years earlier, she would have been in the middle of the dancers. The situation was emotionally upsetting for her and we went and sat on the seat watching the celebrations with the cathedral in the background.

Between one group of dancers and the next was a truck spraying water to keep the dust down and wash the streets. A young dancer took off her shoes and stood in front of the truck and had her feet washed and cooled, then blew a kiss to the truck driver who reciprocated with a smile and drove on.

"These people know how to celebrate", I said, but Bredhe was just crying with a mixture of joy for what she had witnessed in sadness at her inability to dance which her mother had on her hundredth birthday, just a few years earlier.

The parades and bands passed on and we went to view the great Catholic cathedral. We returned to the hotel by a different route and to my amazement I saw Dunnes Stores, and on going into it, saw the same layout as the Dunnes Stores at home with one exception. There was a lift, which took us right up to the rear entrance to the lobby of our hotel.

Dunnes Malaga - photo courtesy Niall Harbison

It could also take me down to the underground car park where I had parked my hired car. Ben always procured good sites for shops and this was no exception.

I had not known that he had a number of shops in Spain, and Málaga being the main airport for Irish and British citizens heading to the Costa del Sol would no doubt have brought customers for Ben and indeed the next day we were customers before setting off for Cadiz.

Trip to Cadiz

The trip was uneventful, lots of building sites to our left where we got some glimpse of the Mediterranean Sea glistening in the sun.

As we got nearer to Cadiz I was surprised and pleased to see thousands of acres of wind farms. Getting to Parador Atlantica was very easy as the signposting was clear and the city is small.

The hotel had its own private beach facing the Atlantic and balconies facing the sea. As we were staying in the most luxurious suite, our bags were taken by a young man who obviously thought we were very wealthy, and so he was expecting a good tip.

Beside the door to the suite I noticed a silver plaque with the inscription 'Prince Filipe stayed here.' Alarm bells in my head about cost went off. Pilar had paid the deposit, which I would have to refund her.

Inside there was a large lobby and a sitting room with a balcony facing the Atlantic. Further in was a large bedroom with a similar balcony facing the Atlantic, a bathroom with a shower, and a large Jacuzzi.

I stayed in many hotels in Europe, America, and parts of Asia, but this for comfort, scenery, and stunningly beautiful sunsets beat them all.

Bredhe was the happiest I've seen her since her life-threatening brain hemorrhage. She even initiated sex and proudly announced that she had a wonderful orgasm. Thomas, Pilar, and their little boy Tomás, came regularly from their holiday apartment. Tomás loved the pool and the

In Cadiz with Thomas' wife Pilar - summer 2005

children's playground.

Pilar's family joined us for dinner and it was nice to meet them again as we hadn't seen them since the wedding in Seville five years earlier.

We walked around Cádiz. Walking was made easier by the shade provided in the very narrow streets. Taxis were plentiful and cheap by our standards. For trips in the countryside I took out my hired car and visited beauty spots and wine centers. The wine was very cheap, but of course I was driving hence no drinking just tasting.

Horses in Jerez

Thomas suggested that we all go to the famous horse arena in Jerez, and of course being lovers of horses we agreed. We traveled in a small train. To the left and right we could see the mountains of sea salt. Seawater fills the salt beds where the heat of the sun evaporates the water, leaving the salt to be harvested.

After harvesting seawater, sea covers the beds again and so it goes on mainly from March to October. The salt mountains were loaded by big machines into high-sided trucks for the journey to the refinery. I saw similar, but much smaller sea harvesting operations in other Mediterranean countries previously. The practice goes back to biblical times. As salt is an essential element for our health not just a condiment. It has of course many other uses.

We arrived in good time for the action and we had excellent seats. The show was quite spectacular and what they could get these Lipizzaner horses to do; like trotting in perfect timing with music, to walking on their hind legs was amazing.

The horses of course were beautiful and the riders were dressed in traditional Spanish dress. Tomás was fascinated and excited by the spectacle so he had a good sleep on the train on the way back to Cádiz.

After Cadiz

Driving from Cadiz to Málaga to fly home Bredhe asked me to stop on a number of occasions. She was not feeling well. My hopes of a health improvement after the Cadiz holiday were once more dashed. We stayed in the same hotel in Málaga to rest before the flight home.

Thomas, Pilar, and Tomás stayed in Seville and drove from Seville in the morning to join our flight. The temperature at 8 a.m. in Seville he told me was 27 degrees centigrade. We boarded the same flight and got home without any difficulties. Just one week later, as I was playing golf with the seniors, I checked on my mobile at the Ninth Green (the nearest green to the clubhouse in Fota) and I could get no answer from home. I sensed there was something wrong.

Much to the annoyance of my golf partners, I departed and at home I found Bredhe with her reading glasses on, in bed, the book on the floor, and she was deeply unconscious. I called the ambulance. By now the ambulance crew were very familiar with the house and they came in with all the gear to take her away.

After a pulse check, they carried her down the stairs as they had done many times before and as usual invited me to accompany them in the ambulance, which I did. In casualty the doctors examined her but were not duly alarmed. I walked home as there was a pedestrian shortcut, which enabled me to get home in about 10 minutes. Early the following morning I had a phone call from Bredhe telling me what clothes and shoes she needed. Great, I thought, she is over that episode.

She was in a ward with eight beds. I went in the following morning with Thomas, after packing the clothes Bredhe wanted into a small bag. Having delivered the clothes she said, "My aunt Eiley is over there. I just had a chat with her". We looked but there was no Aunt Eiley. Then she said "There is bucket of pears outside the door" and "can you bring them home for dessert". "I saw no bucket of pears outside the door", I said; and she replied, "Look at some of them there on the locker". There was nothing on the locker.

We started to become alarmed and went to call a nurse. Now she tried to get over the bed, a nurse arrived and raised to the bedside rails, that did not stop her. She tried to get out over the rails. Eventually she was restrained in an armchair by tying her to the chair. I went outside and phoned my sister Lily, a retired nurse, and she said, "It's illegal to tie a patient like that". "Then what can be done?" I inquired. "She can be sedated", Lily said. "But she is allergic to the medicine and that could kill her", I replied.

Eventually she calmed down and fell sleep right in the chair. The nurses knew her well as a regular patient and they were extremely kind to her despite their heavy work schedule.

Approximately one week later I was advised to bring her home. As one doctor said, "Hospitals are dangerous places, she could pick up something like MRSA, which could kill her". 'Good advice", I thought. Thomas and I went in to the hospital to help her to dress, pack, and come home.

I was at the desk signing her out when I saw her right arm twitching uncontrollably. I called a nurse, and before I could say anything she was shipped off in a wheelchair into a private room.

Nurses and doctors were working frantically on her while I was standing with the bag packed to take her home and the discharge papers in my hand.

A doctor emerged to tell me she had suffered a stroke and that I should inform the family. Mary came from Seattle, but Bredhe was deeply unconscious, and after a week Mary returned to the U.S., firmly convinced that she would never see her mother alive again.

Some of her family, minus her mother, who had died two years earlier, came from Kilkenny, including her sister-in-law, a nurse, and they too thought it was the end, and given what she suffered afterwards it would have been better for her if she had died then.

However, she recovered again, but the use for her left side, including her left eye, was severely restricted.

From the General Hospital she was transferred to Mount Desert Nursing Home just before Christmas 2005. Her quality of life was now at a very low level.

She came home mid-January. She tried her beloved painting, but because she had just one eye she could no longer paint; that was a last straw for her.

Pilar, Thomas' wife, had a new baby boy, Enrique, in May '06 and that gave her some joy. Mary came from Seattle for the christening which was in July.

Bredhe at Enrique's Christening in July 2006

On the evening Mary went back Bredhe's crying was unbearable, saying again and again, "I will never see Mary again".

To mind her I had a very kind woman from Chechnya. She told me that in Chechnya one day she went out shopping and when she came home her whole family and her home were wiped out by Russian bombing. The Southern Health Board found accommodation for her in an apartment just up the road, less than half a mile from where we lived.

As months went by, the pain in Bredhe's head increased, as the quality of life decreased. Coming up to next Christmas her ambition was to be able to attend Mass on Christmas Day.

One of her many friends, Paula Delaney, a widow woman offered to help, and she did get to Christmas Mass and the priest, a longtime friend of hers, brought the host to her, as he knew she was unable to get to the altar.

As usual, Thomas with his wife Pilar invited us over for Christmas dinner in their beautiful home in Rushbrook. We had a wonderful meal, but Bredhe was very low. Then, Thomas and his family went to Spain to spend the New Year with Pilar's family. On the evening of the 4th January 2007, Paddy O'Donovan phoned to tell us that his wife Margaret had died in her home.

Normally I would have gone to his home to sympathize and say a prayer, but I explained that I could not leave Bredhe, that she was not very well. He understood.

The next day Bredhe was better and we attended the removal of Joe O'Reilly's remains to his parish church. Joe was a friend and neighbor.

On Sunday morning, January the 7th, Bredhe came down the stairs unaided, had a little breakfast and announced that she would like to accompany me to mass.

Very quickly I said, why not wait and go to

the funeral mass for Margaret O'Donovan tomorrow. Oh, that's a good idea she said, and turned to go back to bed. Suddenly I heard a thud in the hallway. I ran to see her on the floor, conscious, saying, "Go onto Mass, I'll be okay".

I did the usual during a crisis; I called on Audrey and Kevin next door, who I refer to as the neighbors from heaven. They were in immediately and helped to get her upstairs to bed.

"You go onto Mass", Audrey said, "And I'll stay with her until you get back". I rang Thomas in Spain before leaving to let him know Bredhe was unwell. He was flying home with his family later that day, in any case.

I went to the 9 a.m. mass with an uneasy mind and left mass before the sermon was over. When I got home Bredhe was deeply unconscious. Kevin holding her wrist said that the pulse is strong. I did the usual, call the ambulance and it arrived promptly.

They were now very accustomed to the house and in no time they had her in a stretcher and into the ambulance. Every other time they invited me to travel with them, but this time they advised that I should not go into the hospital for some time; obviously they knew she was dangerously ill.

In less than 30 minutes I went in. Two young people, a man and a woman, people I had never seen before, were just standing at the foot of the bed. They began to ask me questions about her health, to which I replied, all her health records are in two large files in this hospital going back over a period of more than 25 years. No more conversation.

A mask covered her face and she was breathing deeply. "Why don't you go home and rest" the lady said "and we'll call you if there is any change?" I interpreted that to mean, "You're just a nuisance here". I did as I was told.

Within an hour the phone rang and I picked it up. A very foreign accent inquired, "Are you Mr. Raftery?" "Yes", I said. He then said, "Your wife is now on a life support machine". "What?", I replied. "Do you not understand what I am saying?" he said. I replied, "Are you telling me that she cannot live without this life support?" "Yes", he said. "Will I switch it off? Do you hear me? Will I switch it off? Mr. Raftery, will I switch it off?" he said again in a very aggressive manner. "Yes", I replied. My whole married life of 49 years flashed across my mind.

Next step, as usual, was to call Thomas. He was on the way to the airport in Malaga for his flight home. Then I called Audrey and Kevin. They were in immediately. Audrey was crying and she embraced me. Kevin offered to drive me to the hospital and Audrey accompanied us. What I witnessed was beyond belief. The body was thrown half naked on top of the next bed, eyes and mouth open.

On the farm where I grew up, dead animals were treated with more dignity than this. Audrey embraced me and turned my face away. The young woman and the man were still there. The woman took us to a little tearoom and offered us tea and coffee. Then the man arrived to tell us that there would have to be a postmortem, which would delay the funeral.

"In heaven's name" I said, "why have a postmortem for a woman who was anointed three times in this hospital in the last 20 years?" There was no reply.

A short time later a senior doctor came in and very quickly reversed the decision about the postmortem. Clearly the doctor with the foreign accent knew nothing of her health records, neither did he know how Irish people break bad news about death.

After The Death

Kevin and Audrey took me home and while I was phoning Audrey made the tea.

I phoned Mary in the U.S. I phoned Ted Bennett and he promised to inform his family. I phoned my eldest sister Mary and my sister Lily, a former nurse.

Lily said herself and Joe would travel and stay with me for a few days for support. That was comforting. They arrived around 4 p.m., which was great, as neighbors were calling all afternoon.

When John and Mary Hall arrived, the wailing of Mary could be heard out on the road. John explained that because Mary had motor neuron disease, she had no means of controlling the sounds she was making. Mary and Bredhe were great friends for more than 20 years.

A message from the hospital informed us that the body could be viewed in the hospital morgue about midday on Monday. Thomas, Pilar and Tomás arrived about 7 p.m. Thomas undertook to contact Willy O'Connor's Funeral Home early on Monday morning.

On Monday morning Willy's son arrived and Thomas was here early. Mr. O'Connor helped to get the notice in the newspapers, the timber to go in the coffin, deciding who would sing at the mass, and what we would like her to sing, who would accompany her on the organ, who would speak on behalf of the family, and what would be placed in the coffin.

I decided that the flower arranger Bredhe had used in the past would arrange the flowers for the coffin and nothing more on the coffin. I decided that Thomas would speak at the funeral mass. I also decided against the modern trend of bringing items up to place on the coffin, which pleased Mr. O'Connor.

The time of removal from O'Connor's Funeral Home was decided and Mr. O'Connor was off. His cool advice and professionalism made matters easier.

After that I went for a long walk by the River Lee in the Lee Fields, her favorite walk when she was able to walk. The usual walkers offered me sympathy, and some who had not heard of the death inquired for her.

From there I went to the Leisure Center in the Kingsley, where I worked out on the treadmill to the point of collapse. It was a great release of tension.

Meanwhile, Lily and Joe answered the door and accepted mass cards and flowers. On the following day the death notice was in the paper and Lily and Joe were busy meeting people while I was again on the treadmill in the Kingsley.

Removal to the church was set for 7 p.m. We went early to the funeral home. The coffin was, as is usual, open. Bredhe looked beautiful. Just how the O'Connor's transformed her appearance to the beautiful woman she was more than 20 years earlier was miraculous. The experience of accepting sympathy and handshakes was not as painful as I had feared.

Next day the mass was celebrated in the church of the Holy Spirit at Dennehy's Cross. Chief celebrant was her first cousin, Patty Foley, a former All-Ireland hurler with Kilkenny.

The soprano who sang, sang beautifully. Thomas spoke briefly and well, after which he got a round of applause. The coffin was placed in the hearse, and people lined up to sympathise. A little woman who called regularly for food for her family sympathised with me and then promptly joined the queue again to sympathise with me a second time!

O'Connor's were trying to get the hearse moving. When we got into the funeral car the driver said, "Did you see there was standing room only at the back of the church?" "No, I did not see", I said. Then he just said, "This is the biggest funeral I have seen since Jack Lynch died". That was surely an exaggeration. Nevertheless, it was a wonderful tribute to "Blow-ins", a term used to describe people who come to

Cork to work as adults.

After the prayers in the graveyard it was back to the Kingsley for a meal. Some of my family and cousins were absent. I inquired about them and I was given more bad news. My sister Bridie in California also died on Sunday, but they withheld the news from me.

The funeral in California was delayed to accommodate those who wished to attend both funerals. It brought back a quote from Shakespeare, "When troubles come they come not single-handed."

Strange Behavior Before Death

Bredhe always had a small appetite, but for some weeks before death her appetite was amazing. She had good lunches and in between meals she was eating biscuits. This was most unusual. So after she was dead and gone I was curious to know why there was such a change of appetite.

I spoke with John Hall, who had been a professor of Human Physiology in UCC for many years. John's reply was as follows: "It's a well-known phenomenon" said John, adding, "the brains stimulates the appetite to protect the body." That explanation was comforting and I could only wonder what complex creatures we are.

The other change was more complex. I noticed that the wardrobes were getting more and more full with clothes. Even the walk-in attic space was filled with clothes. How this was happening baffled me. This was like the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

Mary tried on a new dress and she looked stunning in it, a perfect fit, even though Mary was 5 inches taller. The cat was out of the bag as they say, she was being supplied with clothes when I was out.

Thomas, who is always more observant than myself said, "I know who is supplying the clothes". Immediately I said "I don't want to know so please never mention the name. What's done is done", and the clothes would be donated to Concern.

I named the charity concern, as I knew the Director Tom Arnold, who was previously Assistant Secretary in the Department of Agriculture, a very good job, but Tom gave up the job to become the Director of Concern to help the poor and starving in many countries in Africa.

Concern

I phoned Concern offering the clothes. "Bring them in" a lady said. "It's not that easy", I replied, saying, "could you call to see what I have?" "Where do you live?" she said When I told her, she said "I live nearby, so I can call after 6 p.m".

When she called and looked in amazement at the quantity of clothes, she left a bag of plastic bags for the clothes. Lily and Joe started packing next day and Lily set aside some clothes for our nieces. The lady from Concern called later that day and filled her car.

The following day a phone call from Concern was answered by Lily. The lady from Concern just said, "Do you know the price tags are still on some of the clothes you sent us?" "Of course I know, I put them into the bags" said Lily, "adding we have another carload for you".

And then there were shoes by the hundreds, this included 10 odd shoes, all right footed, as there was no feeling on the left side after the stroke, she would regularly lose the left shoe.

Art books

Her great passion was painting and the study of the History of Art. She got a diploma in the History of Art despite being in declining health. Over the years she collected a very large number of books on the history of art.

In a small bedroom she had bookshelves installed floor to ceiling and a special art desk designed, where she studied and painted. It was her space, which I did not frequent.

After her death I had a closer look in. Shelves were stacked from floor to ceiling with books in the history of art. Then I remembered that everywhere we traveled she somewhere found an art gallery or an arts shop and we scarcely ever returned without a book or two on art. Also Thomas and Pilar regularly gave her presents of Art books for birthdays, Christmas, or any time they travelled.

Two years after her death I heard that UCC was introducing a degree course in the History of Art. I phoned the librarian, John Fitzgerald, whose father-in-law was the first to identify toxoplasmosis in sheep at the Research Center in Grange, County Meath. This was the same disease Bredhe picked up in 1960s, somewhere on the continent

John said, "I will call on the way home". He called and I took him to her art room. He just looked in amazement. Every book he picked up left him lost for words. "Such a private collection! I will send out Olivia Fitzpatrick tomorrow", he said, "to see how many of the books will suit our purposes".

Olivia arrived and during discussion I discovered she was the daughter of Jean Healey, a well-known and well-respected journalist in her days. She toiled all afternoon cataloguing and then told me a college van would collect the books. The van arrived next day, but it was unable to take all the books in one load. Olivia arrived next day and brought the remainder of the books in her car.

Some weeks later a lovely reception was held in a room in the library, to honour the donation. I was invited and I invited many of our friends.

Professor Watts, despite being in poor heath, came from Dublin. Bredhe's cousin Virginia Teehan, Director of the Hunt Museum in Limerick, drove her car to Cork despite a very wet and windy afternoon to be at the function. Many of her friends from the Crawford Gallery also attended.

Caravaggio

I retained roughly 12 books for myself, two of which were my favorites, Caravaggio and Rome, Art and Architecture of Rome. I loved Caravaggio's paintings and his wild lifestyle, culminating in murder and his dying from malaria weeks before his 39th birthday, which he picked up while on the run from the police.

We visited my sister Joan in Rome on wedding anniversaries. Joan knew that I was an admirer of Caravaggio. On our last visit to Rome before Joan was diagnosed with cancer, she brought us to a church, Santa Maria del Popolo rather than to her local church. Surprisingly the church was full with people.

Immediately after the mass there was a rush of people both sides to the altar. Naturally I was curious to know what they were looking for. On going up I saw the original by Caravaggio of 'The conversion of Saint Paul' and 'The Crucifixion of Saint Peter', both wonderful paintings. That explained to me why the church was so full when other churches were almost empty.

In Dublin there was a Jesuit priest, a Father Brendan, a native of County Kilkenny. He lectured in UCD and lived in the Jesuit House not far from UCD. Father Brendan regularly told us of the beautiful painting in the Jesuits' dining room.

He exhorted the Jesuits to have it examined, but they just ignored him. A new Director in the National Gallery heard about the painting in the Jesuits' dining room. He paid a visit and asked if he could take the painting back to the gallery to have it examined. The Jesuits agreed.

After a thorough examination the painting was declared to be 'The Taking of Christ', which was a long-lost Caravaggio. The Jesuits were astonished. They had little information on how it had been acquired.

Someone traced it back to a surgeon in Scotland, who is long since dead. It now

rests in the National Gallery in Dublin, a priceless acquisition acquired at no cost to our very fine gallery. Full marks to the new Director and his staff and to Father Brendan.

I had another reason for keeping the book on Caravaggio, on the flyleaf was the following, "To my darling Bredhe on the occasion of our 48th wedding anniversary. Love Tom."

Chapter 16 - The Lectures

Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons AGM 1981 – on topic of Fota

King Henry II allocated land, taken from the McCarthy, Irish Chieftains in the 12th century. The de Barrys were recipients of significant tracts of land. They continued for the most part to live in London, where they lived life to the full.

Meantime they built their first stronghold, Barryscourt Castle near Carrigtwohill, just a couple of miles from Fota. Being Catholics at that a time, they ingratiated themselves to the Irish peasants by building a monastery in Buttavent for the Franciscans in 1251 and a few years later built a monastery for the Augustinians at Ballybeg, just a few miles from Buttavent. The ruins of both monasteries are still very evident. Following the Reformation, they demonstrated their loyalty to the Crown by becoming Protestants.

Centuries later, following a marriage to a wealthy American heiress, the family became became Smith-Barry. The then de Barrys came to Cork in 1775 and the last direct descendant, Dorothy, who married a Major Bell, died in 1975 following which UCC purchased Fota, against very strong opposition from the Irish Farmers Association (IFA).

The President of the College, Dr. Donal McCarthy was opposed to the move, but the majority of the Governing Body supported my proposal that UCC should buy it, so the 780 acre estate, with a private railway station, world renowned arboretum and gardens, tow boat slips and hundreds of acres of woodland, was purchased for the sum of £400,000.

Prior to the purchase by UCC, the general public were denied access. It was my firm ambition to open Fota to the general public and that was achieved two years later.

Fota

The Farm

The primary reason for the purchase of Fota was to provide farmland for the Dairy & Food Science Faculty of the College. The 400 acres of farmland are now being farmed intensively. Already a very successful dairy herd with over 200 cows milking has been established. A new dairy unit using the latest concepts in housing, milking and feeding, and built totally from pre-cast , pre-stressed hollow core concrete panels, has been commissioned.

The milk from this unit will be used primarily for teaching and research purposes in the new processing facility just recently completed within the College Complex Training Facility for students of Dairy Science, Meat Science and Farm home Management is generally believed to be one of the finest of its kind in the world.

The dairy herd will also be used for teaching and research associated with milk production, milk hygiene, milk cooling and transport, as well as cow nutrition and calf nutrition, etc.

The farm has also got a number of other enterprises, including a beef unit and tillage crops.

The Aboretum

Considerable work was involved in restoring the arboretum to something approaching its former glory. Disease, dead and fallen trees had to be removed. Overgrown pathways were opened up and scrub cleared away. More important, however, was the accurate identification of over 1,000 different trees and shrubs. In this, the help of the National Botanic Garden, An Foras Taluntais, John F. Kennedy Memorial Park and several of the institutions and individuals proved invaluable for the institution, such as UCC, which had little experience or expertise in the science of dendrology. New labels using a hot tinfoil branding technique on black plastic were used. The botanical name in Latin, the

common name in English as well as dates of planting, country of origin and height at last measurement are all given where possible on the label. When this work was completed, a new catalogue of trees and shrubs was published.

Planting a wide variety of new material commenced in 1976 and has since continued. However, I regret to report that we suffered heavy losses of this new young material from the effects of the severe winter of 1979, which recorded the lowest temperatures in Fota since 1947. At present, we are co-operating closely with Edinburgh Botanic Gardens. The authorities there are most anxious to try many of the rare and tender varieties, which they can only grow under glass, out of doors in Fota, and we are pleased to co-operate. The first consignment from Edinburgh is now growing in Fota. We are also co-operating with An Foras Taluntais and the National Botanic Gardens in planting new material. In this connection, we have at present roughly 1/5 of an acre of Gingko growing on trial in conjunction with An Foras Taluntais and a factory at Little Island, which is anxious to grow the Ginko successfully in Ireland in order to eliminate the need to import Gingko leaf, from which an extract is used for pharmaceutical purposes.

For the woodlands, the Forest and Wildlife Service has given us a complete inventory of the trees, plus a programme for selective felling and replanting, which is now under way.

The Lakes and Salt Marshes

Two of the three freshwater lakes have been cleaned up and have been re-stocked by the Inland Fisheries Trust, which with the co-operation of the Zoology Department of UCC will be monitoring the progress of the young fish. The other lake, the largest and most difficult one is now being cleaned up to become an important amenity area in the future.

The salt marshes will, of course, be left undisturbed for study purposes.

Study and Research

The principal users of the estate for study purposes are out students of Botany in UCC. For these a small but well equipped field laboratory has been functioning in a wing of Fota House for the past four years. Students can collect their samples in the estate from woods, lakes, mudflats, salt marsh, etc., and then take them into the laboratory for detailed examination.

Students of the Faculty of Engineering use Fota for survey practice and post-graduate projects in soil mechanics, etc., Dairy Science students use the farm, particularly the dairy unit, while student of Zoology have opportunities to study the fauna of woodland, mudflats, fresh water and sea water.

Fota has also been used regularly by bodies such as An Taisce for seminars on biology, while local schools and technical schools, as well as the Regional Technical College also avail of its potential. Last year we had approximately 3,000 children on conducted tours through the arboretum. Research is, as yet, largely confined to the farm enterprises. Some other research, however, is in progress. One project funded to the tune of roughly £70,000 by N.B.S.T. on pollution in the harbour and carried out jointly by the Departments of Botany and Zoology in UCC is now nearing completion. Small projects in relation to aerial pollution, lichen surveys, bird surveys etc. are in progress.

A major solar energy project directed by Professor Gerald Wrixon is just commencing and this is being funded to the tune of £800,000 by the E.E.C., with a little help from B.B.S.T. and E.S.B. The real potential of Fota for research and teaching has yet to be tapped.

Amenity and the Public

When UCC purchased Fota, it gave an undertaking that the Scouts would continue to enjoy the access they always had during Mrs. Bell's time. That undertaking has been honoured, and facilities for the

Scouts improved. Scout usage of Fota has increased dramatically, with camps from all over Ireland and some also from Britain, notably Wales.

With the assistance of Cork Corporation, Cork Council Council and Bord Failte, a detailed study of the amenity potential of Fota was prepared in 1976/77. Much of the recommendations were implemented and the public were admitted on a non-paying basis, on Sundays and public holidays in 1979 and 1980. This year it will open in early April and will be open every day of the week. Public toilets, car parks, picnic areas and access control gates are now in use. The public come by road and rail, and very shortly I expect they will be coming by boat. The numbers visiting on Sundays last year amounted to roughly 35,000 over the summer period.

The House

Part of the house is used regularly for scientific, social and musical functions. These vary from light to classical – the most recent performance was given by the RTE Academic String Quartet. The remainder of the house is being redecorated along original lines to be used as an art gallery. The collection will contain 30 of the original collection in Fota House, plus the best collection of Irish landscape paintings from Irish Artists of the 18th and 19th centuries. Hopefully, too, pictures will be loaned from time to time by the National Gallery and the Cork School of Art.

In addition to the paintings, the house will be furnished with fine period furniture and sculpture. A Caretaker and Curator will reside in the house, which will also have a small shop and afternoon tea facilities in the old kitchen.

Fota – Future Plans

The Wildlife Park Project: Of all our future plans for Fota the most exciting is, perhaps, the establishment of a Wildlife Park in Fota by the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland. In area this will be almost three times the size of the Dublin Zoo. In design it will be very open, with no barriers or fences visible. Animals will be retained by means of moats and dykes. Apart from having the usual range of animals which one finds in zoos, it will concentrate on breeding endangered species, such as cheetahs and Oryx and others for export to zoos elsewhere. Special attention will also be given in the design to maximising its potential for teaching and research purposes. Native Irish animals as well as the usual farm animals will also be featured.

A major national fund raising campaign got under way to finance the project, and work begun on the site. The opening date was spring, 1983. The project was to be run and managed by the Dublin Zoo, with a local advisory Committee at this end.

Eventually the hope was to have a museum in the coach yard. This museum would deal largely with the history of farming and country life in the Munster region. It expectation was that some material would be available on the loan from the National Museum when the decentralisation of our National Museum got under way.

Further lecutures at Home and Overseas

My lectures at home were from Cork to Donegal and Galway to Dublin, mainly from the early seventies to the mid eighties – a time when our economy was in tatters and our principal exports were unprocessed beef, live cattle and young people, who lost confidence in the Irish economy.

The messages in my lectures were simple – We are not using our two most valuable assets – educated and unskilled young people and the good soils of Ireland, of which we had more per head than any other country in Europe.

I used Holland and Denmark as examples. Holland, a little country scarcely larger than Munster and feeding a population of roughly 16 million people, was exporting more from the land than we were able to do.

I posed the question again and again as to why our politicians could not see our failing. Land, I pointed out is an enduring resource, unlike mines or oil wells and gas fields. It fell largely on deaf ears in the Irish Parliament, but was received very warmly by young people on the land, who were frustrated by the inactivity of both the Dail and their ageing fathers who were adverse to change. Suddenly my message got through to the non farming sector who depended on the products and prosperity of the farming hinterland. The first breakthrough of my message was to the Cork Chamber of Commerce, following which the President of the Chamber wrote as follows:

Foreword... (By the President of the Cork Chamber of Commerce)

"*Too many people still see the land as an object of property rather than of Industry and Enterprise*"

On June 10th, 1982 the Chamber heard a luncheon address by Professor T.F. Raftery. The points made in that address were fundamentally relevant to the economic needs of the country that it was the unanimous view of the Council of the Chamber that the paper should be printed and circulated to our members.

In the desperate struggle to create employment and national wealth, we have performed woefully in the exploitation of our greatest national asset. I support the view that the easiest and least hazardous road back to a sound economy is via the development of agriculture and fisheries.

The nation needs people of knowledge, skill and courage to point the way down this road. As President of the Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to introduce this paper by Professor Raftery, as a contribution towards greater commercial interest and involvement in the exploitation of the nation's wealth.

The full paper was circulated to all members of the Chamber.

Just two months previous to this address, I was very honoured to be invited to give the Dr. Henry Kennedy Memorial Lecture. Dr. Kennedy was brother-in-law of our First Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Paddy Hogan and he had become the Secretary of the Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society. Dr. Kennedy was probably saying the same thing as I was now saying 30 years earlier. He had become my great mentor, so I was more than pleased to be invited.

Herewith is the summary of my lecture:

1. Forty four years after the late Dr. Kennedy pointed out the disparity between farming and non farming incomes and how we might increase farm and national income by making better use of our grassland, we still have a very substantial gap in income between farmers and industrial workers, and we still have 80% of our grassland badly farmed.

2. Twenty-two years after the late Taoiseach, Mr. Sean Lemass, emphasised the need to put aside our differences and old attitudes and the need for a sustained effort from all sectors of the community, we are more divided, more entrenched and more self-centred now than we were then.

3. Ten years ago, just prior to our EEC entry, it was anticipated that the guaranteed markets and higher prices in the community would stimulate very significant increases in production at farm levels. Ten years later we find our cattle numbers at 1972 levels, our sheep population down by over 20%, our tillage acreage little changed, with only milk output increased, and all of this after farmers have invested £2,000,000 on their farms since our EEC entry.

4. Judged by any standards, the developments of the country's main asset has not been very successful – it has been very disappointing.

5. Of all the mistakes we made in agriculture, the greatest, I feel, was our failure to develop an energetic and trained farming community by getting more of our land under the control of younger and better trained people. The farmers themselves through their co-operatives should have done more to help farming at farm level where the greatest scope for improving farm income exists. In addition to the advisory services, greater use should have been made of Vocational Schools, Regional Technical Colleges etc.

6. The health of the agricultural industry is inextricably linked to the health of the economy as a whole, and vice versa. Much of the misfortunes of agriculture since 1978 arise from ill-advised policies in the economy, which we as a nation have been pursuing since the mid seventies – policies which tended to penalise the productive and reward the unproductive.

Farming was at last on the move, seeking out knowledge and using it. Open days at the Dairy Research Institute in Moorepark drew crowds like race meetings year in year out.

Likewise, but on a smaller scale, the other research centres of the Agricultural Institute such as the Beef Research Farm in Grange, Co. Meath, the Soils Research at Johnstown Castle, Wexford, the Sheep Research Unit in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo and the Tillage Crops Unit in Carlow, plus a number of demonstration farms on difficult soils in Co. Clare, Co. Leitrim and elsewhere.

What a wonderful change from what I saw, as a child, at the Agricultural College in Athenry, "Private Property" notice at the front gate, in other words, you are not welcome here.

UCC Public Lecture Series

I was invited to give the first of the "Public lecture Series:

It was an address to the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants –Published by Cork University Press.

This is the summary of my lecture:

1. Directly and indirectly, agriculture employs roughly 40% of our total labour force, provides roughly 34% of gross exports, or nearly 50% of net exports.

2. All this is achieved by an industry which is the most under-capitalised and lease developed of all EEC countries, excluding Greece, which has an entirely different type of agriculture.

3. Over 90% of our farmland is under pasture and the two main products of our grass – beef, cattle and milk provide 70% of gross agricultural output.

4. It is estimated that 80% of our grassland is badly farmed, and that a doubling of output from our grassland is an achievable target.

5. Full exploitation of our grassland would take a considerable period of time, as it would involve a huge increase in cattle numbers. In the meantime, however, between £500,000,000 and £600,000,000 extra could be produced from our existing cattle population, primarily by using better management to increase milk and reduce mortality, especially calf mortality.

6. Such better management can only come through the adoption of new technology.

7. Our farm population as at present constituted is particularly ill-equipped to adopt such technology for reasons of age, training and marital status.

8. No real progress towards utilising our land more effectively can be made until we bring more of our underutilised land under the control of younger, more energetic and trained people.

9. The best hope of achieving this aim is through the introduction of a long-term leasing programme, with preference being given in terms of credit and grants, etc., to young people who can show evidence of their competence to farm well.

10. We should all use our influence to help bring this about, as better utilisation of our two greatest resources – our land and our young people, is the best, if not the only hope of solving the very serious economic and social problems which afflict our country today.

"A Contribution that was later to change my life".

It was at a conference in UCC organised by the UCC Adult Education Department. Amongst other speakers were Junior Minister Hugh Coveney and Bishop Cathal Daly, who I found to be a very sociable person.

Before the conference opened, I gave my script to Hugh Coveney TD, who read it carefully and then saying "are you going to say that? Is it accurate"? he asked. "Yes, I said" Hugh added "You are a brave man". I was the focus of attention and under fire from vested interests, but I more than held my own and the Catholic Church too came in for some criticism, which the Bishop graciously acknowledged.

It was what I did not say, or rather that I had not the courage to say, in reply to the Bishop's comments on the role of women in society, which left me fuming. In plain language, what he was saying was that women had no right to use artificial means of limiting family size – the image of my mother who was widowed when the eldest of ten children was just fifteen came to mind, as did the image of my eldest sister who had twelve children and her husband died aged 52 years, and there were many other such cases in my youth. I was not aware of any special help from the priests for these unfortunate women. In those times to contradict a Cardinal would have been totally unacceptable – yes, I was a coward who stayed quiet.

The media, of course, loved it and of course the Secretary of the Adult Education Department was elated by such a lively start to the series. Deputy Coveney invited me to become active in the Fine Gael Party, but I declined, having more than enough to do to get the Fota Wildlife Park up and running.

Invited Lectures from Outside of the Irish Republic

1. Queens University Belfast

2. Agricultural Co-Operative in Armagh

3. International Soya Bean Conference in London

4. Farming Conference in Wales

5. Co-Operative Conference, Edinburgh

6. Food Conference, Brussels

7. US Meat Exporter's Conference, Minneapolis, USA.

8. Texas Cattle Feeder's Conference Dallas, Texas

9. Dairy Conference, Olde, Westphalia, Germany

10. Beef Conference, Cincinati, USA.

Epilogue

My father, Prof Tom Raftery wrote this manuscript longhand as several separate documents during 2008/9. In 2010 he asked me to have some of them typed up. I did but while they were being typed, Dad became ill and was hospitalised for a time. I collected the printed out typed copies from the typist to deliver to Dad to be proofed, but the nature of his illness meant he didn't manage to do it.

I revisited the text in 2013 in the weeks coming up to his 80th birthday, as I thought a bound, book-form copy, would make a nice present for him.

Subsequent to printing out a hardback version, I discovered more handwritten manuscripts relevant documents and photographs in Dad's house which hadn't been in the printed book. I digitised them and added them to this second version of the book.

The work involved in finally proofing the text, combining the overlapping texts into a single coherent document was not insignificant. But, it was the least I felt I could do for my father given all he has done for our family.

Any mistakes, repitition of text, layout errors etc. are entirely my responsibility.

Tom Raftery (jnr.)

September 2013.

Prof Tom Raftery, with his ever devoted wife of almost 50 years, Bredhe.

"Hail Mary, Holy Mary, Hail Mary, Holy Mary..."

The prayers came from our parents' room just under the dormer room where we slept, four to a bed, two at the head and two at the foot of the bed. "What's going on?", I asked....