

Chapter 14

Changes in the Countryside.

Over the last century many changes have taken place in the countryside. Take agriculture as one example, the horse one of man's best friends used to be the main draft power on the farms, also for transport. Then in the 1940's tractors became more numerous on the farms, taking over from the horse a lot of the heavy work. In the 1950's the horse gradually faded out. The teams of heavy horses were never to be seen again as the norm ploughing the land as the tractor took over more and more.

From this point onwards mechanization on the farms gained rapidly. The reaper had long gone, superseded by the self binder, and by the mid 1950's the combine harvester was taking over from the self binder. This meant that the thrashing machine was not required to thrash the corn in winter. The only exception being the thrashing machine with the reed comber attached was still required to comb the wheat straw for thatching. I think to walk into a rick yard or a mew stead as the old Devon name was for rick yard, to see half a dozen corn ricks all tidily built and thatched was a lovely sight to see. Something we will never see again, and the smell of freshly thrashed straw after having matured in the rick was something you do not smell after thrashing with the combine harvester in the field.

Most farms kept a few cows for domestic use, others kept from 10 - 16, but very few kept over 20 cows, that would be a big herd in the 1930's in Tawstock Parish. At that time milk could be sold locally, some farmers had private milk rounds, and others would sell bulk to small private dairies who had their own milk rounds in the town. Then in 1938 the Milk Marketing Board was set up for the marketing of milk. All milk producers were registered, some producers carried on with their own private milk rounds, while others producing milk had it collected by lorry and taken to the local Milk factory at Torrington. This gave the farmer a regular milk payment each month, paid by the milk marketing board, all be it the price was about 5d or 6d a gallon at best. (That was in old money, 6d = 2 1/2p in modern currency).

Farming in this country had been suppressed for many years up to now, but with the onset of World War 2, Britain had to produce more home grown food to feed the nation. To achieve this Britain had to back up the agriculture of this country. Agriculture met that challenge and produced the food. Thus agriculture became more prosperous. I think its a very sad thing that it took a war to put British agriculture on its' feet, having been let down by successive governments. When we think that agriculture was once the biggest industry in the country.

Up to now the milking of the cows was all done by hand, but gradually vacuum milking machines began to appear on the market. By the 1950's they were getting quite popular.