

John Vaughan

Male

File 1 0:00:00 – 0:05:46

FAMILY BACKGROUND IN WINTERAGE –

John outlines how his grandfather, a native of Crusheen who was a cattle dealer, married into Kilfenora and did not practice winterage. This practice began with his father, Paddy Vaughan. His family took winterages in Ballyvaughan, Carron and Lemenagh.

They would take them to the fair in Loughrea on 11 February and Galway city at the end of February.

John outlines the rationale for winterage. He states that the cattle, which were three year old or cows were cheaper to winterage than feeding them over the winter. He states that east and north of Kilfenora was winterage land. West of Kilfenora was ordinary land.

He outlines how some people bought cattle on 9th of October and 4th of November in Kilfenora. It was usually limestone cattle that were sold here.

On occasion, they would buy cattle from areas like Kilmihil and Miltown. These cattle would need a dose of salts and some bluestone (mixed with salt). The cattle born in north Clare didn't need this additional salt/bluestone.

The older the cattle the better they would thrive in the winterage. John recalls buying cattle in Kilbaha for winterage.

John's father would let winterage to people from Tralee, Clarecastle, Ennis and other places outside of the Burren. John states that it was a cheap way of wintering cattle for these people. John estimates that you would buy a winterage

for forty cattle for £5 or £6 a beast.

File 2 0:00:00 – 0:02:50

BENEFIT OF WINTERAGE –

John outlines the benefit of wintering cattle. He emphasises that the age of cattle was important. They needed to be at least 2.5 years old.

States that it was all Shorthorn breeds in his father's time. He states that other breeds were able to adapt to the Burren Winterage, dependent on their age.

John states that people from Meath would buy Burren wintered cattle at Loughrea, Ballinasloe and Gort fairs. The cattle bought in February would be killed in July and the ones bought in March would be killed in August. John states that cattle left on Winterage after St. Patrick's Day would be going backwards and losing quality and weight.

0:02:51 – 0:06:04

HISTORY OF WINTERAGE AND LIVING OFF THE BURREN –

John speaks about the ancient history of winterage. He speaks about the population in the Burren that used winterage. He outlines how they survived on fishing and farming. He recalls hearing that there were thirty families in a 600 acres farm in the Burren centuries ago. He outlines the self-subsistence of Burren families.

John recalls hearing that fish and butter would be buried in the bog around the Burren in order to preserve it.

John states that the local people would kill the sheep and salt them for their own families.

0:06:04 – 0:08:57

KILLING THE PIG –

John describes the process of killing the pig locally. He states that Peter O'Brien would kill the pig for people in his area (Kilfenora). He also states that a man called Tom Hillery from Lisdoonvarna would travel around North Clare and kill pigs for farmers. He would carry his tools with him on a bicycle.

0:08:57 - 0:11:08

HISTORIC REMAINS -

John states that he was aware of remains of the area but didn't pay head when he was younger. He speaks about the interest in the past now.

Speaks about a Connie Donoghue in Gleninagh where they had a winterage. He recalls Connie describing the people who used to live in the houses that are now only remains.

0:11:08 - 0:13:10

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS -

John speaks about putting holy water on the cattle when you put them up for winterage. John states that a herdsman would check the cattle three times a week and that they would travel up themselves after one month. The man would be living close to the winterage area. He states that the Vaughans would look after a lot of the cattle up there. John states that cattle were a lot healthier in the past.

0:13:10 - 0:15:48

COW DOCTORS -

John outlines some of the Cow Doctors in the area. He states that Paddy Hegarty from Tullagha in Kilfenora was a great man if a beast put a shoulder out in the Burren Winterage. He describes the process that Paddy used.

He states that the Vaughans in Ballyvaughan would be able to help sick cattle also.

States that it was seldom that cattle would be sick. They may get the murren. This would usually be cattle from land where they may not have gotten enough salt.

0:15:49 - 0:18:36

DRIVING CATTLE -

John recalls driving cattle to Ballyvaughan where the Colleys who were related to his mother, had winterage. He recalls walking them to Ballyvaughan,

Note: Interview is interrupted by a phone call.

File 3 0:00:00 - 0:01:09

WATER IN THE BURREN -

John states that there was always water in the Burren for the cattle. He states that there were three divisions in the Ballyvaughan winterage. The herdsman would bring them down to the second division on Christmas eve and the third division at the end of January. This would leave them at the bottom when they needed to be collected.

Refers to a winterage in Carron which is known as 'The Farm of the Seven streams'.

0:03:00 - 0:06:02

HISTORIC REMAINS -

John states that he heard the names of the castles and tower houses in the winterage area but forgot a lot of them. He states that Connie Donoghue and Jim Cosgrave above Lisdoonvarna who were very knowledgeable about the local history of the area. Jim Cosgrave was near Fermoy between Lisdoonvarna and Fanore.

John recalls cycling up to the Burren winterage to bring certain cattle back. They would always bring home a thin animal.

0:06:02 - 0:13:28

MEMORIES OF THE FAIR -

John speaks about the various fairs that they brought the cattle to from the Winterage. They would often take them directly from the winterage to Loughrea fair.

John describes the change in the cattle after the winterage. He says the flesh would go off them but their frames could be bigger. He also states they were very hairy after the winterage.

John states that cattle buyers from Meath and the north of Ireland would be keen to by Burren winteraged cattle. They would thrive very well in the months after winterage.

John describes his memories of the fairs. He states that the farmers in Galway were into the whitehead Herefords before the farmers in Clare. John describes the 'tangles' who would be looking to buy a small few cattle.

John names out the fairs they would go to. They included Galway City, Athenry, Ballinasloe, Gort

NOTE: Heavy rainfall in background - noise interruption

John states that they would buy cattle in Clare before the winterage and then sell them on in Galway after the winterage.

John mentions the hawkers who would attend the fairs to sell their wares.

0:13:28 - 0:18:59

CHANGE TO FARMING AND WINTERAGE -

John speaks about the introduction of sucking in the 1960s which changes the nature of winterage. States that it is mostly cows that are now on the winterage.

John speaks about the different treatment cows require. Cows that are taken to the winterage in November would need help (salts) in January. He speaks about the cost of wintering cows.

States that a lot of the winterages are owned by outsiders and that most local people only use them for cows.

John speaks about the timeline of winterage. He states that it was a good idea to send a few cattle up in June to eat the fresh grass in order to ensure it was even richer in November. This was summer grazing in the uplands.

States that his uncle who had winterage near the Corkscrew Hill who used to place 50 ewes out on the winterage in June.

0:19:00 – 0:20:50

FUTURE OF WINTERAGE –

John insists that the tradition of winterage will continue. He speaks about the impact of the changing climate on winterage.

0:20:51 – 0:22:32

WINTERAGE AND ECOLOGY –

John speaking about the growing awareness of the effect of winterage on the ecology of the Burren. States that farmers place a lot of emphasis on caring for the ecology of the area.

0:22:33 – 0:25:49

FARM MACHINERY –

John states that they didn't have a tractor until the 1980s. He outlines the various farm implements and machinery on his land in his younger life.

States that Martin Hegarty had a horse drawing machine for cutting hay and he

would arrive with four horses who would work in rotation.

John recalls a meitheal working on his farm. He states that the making of a reek of hay was a big day for the meitheal.

0:25:50 – 1:06:42

THATCHING –

John recalls making sÁgán ropes with a binder twine. The rushes would be cut for a month before they were used for thatching. Paddy Reynolds (The Piper) was the most noted thatcher in the area. He was a well-known handyman but he didn't like driving cattle.

He states that reeks of hay and turf would be thatched.

0:28:26 – 0:31:59

CHANGES TO FARMING –

John speaks about the impact of emigration on farming. He also refers to the change from the fair to the mart. He speaks about a man called the 'Cock' Hegarty who emigrated to England but came home because it didn't suit him.

Speaks about various changes to farming life throughout his life time. He laments a lot of the changes to rural life.