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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Old Items Seen At Birch Court

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SHARP INTEREST was stirred by our recent reference to old-time farm tools in the Montague museum. Last week we saw some interesting exhibits at Birch Court on the Experimental Farm.

A model of an old mud digger is one of the most interesting. We can just remember when folks around Rose Valley and surrounding communities hauled mud all the way from Bedeque Bay. It was a nine to ten-mile haul from our place and more from some of the other places to which mud was hauled. And that's a long way to haul such a heavy item with horse-drawn equipment. Add a touch of bad roads – and they often were bad – put in some zero, or near-zero temperatures and you get the idea that the farmer really had it tough in some of his former endeavors.

Incidentally I recall the folk at our house leaving long before dawn to haul lime from a kiln at Victoria. It was done with a horse and cart over a distance of close to ten miles.

One Horse-Power Tread Mill

A ONE-HORSE POWER tread mill is one of the interesting items at Birch Court. I had never seen a mill for one horse before, although I had often seen the 2-horse type. Indeed I often took the horses on and off the old mill at the Matheson farm when I was a boy. It was used mainly for threshing grain but I have seen them used for sawing wood at times.

The one at Birch Court is in good repair and it was loaned by Miller and Tom Sanderson of North River whom many people know for their high class Hereford cattle.

There's a large rake for hay, grass, etc. that looks as though it would take a Sampson or an Angus MacAskill, the Cape Breton giant, to operate it. Apparently for hand use, it's really giant size. There is also a large wooden rake that was horse drawn.

AN OLD-FASHIONED threshing outfit takes the eye. It is the drum, with shaker and cleaner type. I think that's what they used to call them. The drum is made completely of wood which dates it back over the years.

A set of fanners stirs old memories but I wouldn't be surprised if some people still use them. They are hand turned and they are good enough to go to work anytime, if anyone feels like having some healthful exercise.

I FORGOT to mention the "flail" in referring to the museum at Montague. This was used for threshing grain and went out of general use many years ago. But I can recall a neighbour who invariably threshed some early oats for his pampered driving mare, before the mechanical thresher arrived to do his annual threshing chore.

It's a slow way of beating the grain from the sheaf but this fellow, a 6-foot, 200-pounder, used to get the grain for his favorite horse with an apparent minimum of effort.

Beef Discussion Is Postponed

THE STORM which clogged most P.E.I. roads early this week has forced postponement of the proposed beef producers meeting at Summerside. Scheduled originally for Monday night, it was postponed until Wednesday evening when Monday's storm threatened, and then pushed ahead more or less indefinitely when the storm seriously curtailed Island traffic.

Livestock Director L.W.Roper said "we are postponing it until the first of the year when we'll take another look at the problem. If travel conditions are not good then, we shall probably postpone it until spring.

"We want to get the boys on the backroads to our meeting as well as those on the highway, and it's not much sense holding a meeting unless everyone who wants to attend can get to it." the provincial livestock director said.

THE IDEA is to organize the province's beef producers with a view to a more uniform supply of high grade beef. A high "Commercial" grade or a "Blue Brand" product is the goal for many more of the province's animals that are slaughtered for beef.

"Right now we see some of this high class beef at Easter and perhaps it is July before we see it again", Mr. Roper said this week. The hope is to have a bigger supply of good beef, have it come on the market at more regular intervals and, if possible, to keep the meat buyers informed on what can be expected at various seasons of the year.

If that sounds like a tall order, Mr. Roper assures that a similar idea has worked in Ontario.

Water Shortage Causes Concern

THE SUDDEN advent of winter, after nearly seven months of summer, has left some farmers faced with the grim prospect of hauling water for large herds of cattle. That was bad enough back in the days that sort of thing was closer to normal. Now with water systems bringing the liquid automatically to the bowls in front of the stock, it is a major handicap.

A neighbour has the water bowls for his cows. He has had them for some time. But this year his supply is almost non-existent. Unless heavy rains come before winter settles in for good, he is faced with a task to which he is not looking forward.

Not in years has he been short of water, but it's happened this time. I wonder how many farmers are faced with the same situation