



THE IMPORTANCE OF IRISH TRAVELLING HERDS TO THE HISTORY OF THE OLD IRISH GOAT AND SOUTH ARMAGH ALIKE

RAYMOND WERNER, JUNE, 2017



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SPIRIT, TRADITIONS, AND HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH ARMAGH

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INTRODUCTION

In 1960, I was a sixth form student and immersed in collecting and collating information on Britain's naturalised animals for a book that was slowly taking shape. This information could only be found- so I thought- as minor mentions in a wide variety of works, and in my juvenile enthusiasm I spent many hours in the school library converting my folders of references into a workable document, believing that it would be highly original: the best made schemes of mice and men, one might say!

I always contrived to sit near to the shelving that contained the books relating to natural history in the school library (my comfort zone), and for some months had been semi-aware of a book that was entitled 'The Ark In Our Midst', but had not had the inclination to take it off the shelf for a closer look. Eventually, and when my work was taking shape, I did so, only to find that R. S. R. Fitter had already researched the naturalised animals of the British Isles, publishing his work only the year before and in 1959.

Naturally, I was devastated, but took to reading Fitter's work with a vengeance. Under the heading of 'Escaped Domestic Animals', Fitter included six pages on the 'Wild Goat', this being my introduction to feral goats, and I was mesmerised. Fitter introduced me to the research of Fraser Darling that sought to establish that our feral goats are nothing more than ordinary domestic goats that have 'reverted to the wild type' due to natural selection, and this led on to my exploring, then rejecting, this theory, replacing it with a contrary theory that our feral goats were, in fact, the remnants of our ancient landrace goat breeds (completing this research in 1965). This, then, is how I came to work for the

next fifty-seven years to get the Old Irish and Old British landrace breeds recognised, protected and preserved.

At this point, you may be wondering what this has to do with Irish Travelling Herds, but all will become clear. In his sub-section on Welsh feral goats, Fitter made mention of how the Welsh herds originated, then quoted G. Kenneth Whitehead's article on the Wild Goats of Wales, published in *Country Life* in 1957. In reference to this, Fitter stated that:

Another suggestion is that escaped members of herds of Irish goats that used to be driven through Wales for sale in England might have added their quota to the parentage of the modern flocks. G. K. Whitehead tells us that one of the last such droves, 300 goats escorted by five dogs, three men and three boys, traversed Mynydd Epynt in 1891, on its way from Cardigan to Kent.

I made haste to my local library and requested a copy of the *Country Life* article, only to find that it added nothing to Fitter's quote.

I was hooked, even so. How often were these goats brought into the country, and in what numbers? Just as importantly, why were they brought in and, given that the goats were imported in 'droves', what was the background of the drovers?

Over the years in researching our landrace goats, I learnt a little more about the Irish Travelling herds, but the real issue, this being the human side of the story- in other words the stuff of history- somehow remained elusive. There were periodic chinks of light, even so.

When getting to grips with the origin and history of the Old English goat, I referenced Holmes Pegler's 1886 edition of 'The Book of the Goat', and there, in the section on the Irish goat, was mention of Irish Travelling herds.

Firstly, and when discussing goat numbers in Ireland, Pegler mentioned not only that 'large numbers' of Irish goats were exported annually into England, but that during three weeks in July, 1880, a total of 900 head left Ireland for England. These 'large droves', to quote Pegler again, made their appearance annually throughout most of the market towns of England and Scotland, and so I now had a picture of their numbers and distribution, although what Pegler called 'the herdsmen' who brought them still remained somewhat elusive aside of the fact that this author referred to them as being thoroughly Irish!

The effects that the importation of Old Irish goats had on British native goat stock became clearer as time went on. In researching the Victorian Goat Revival for the British Goat Society, this revival taking place in the 1870's and '80's and led on to the founding of the BGS in 1879, I found references to Old Irish goats from these travelling herds turning up at the goat shows that started in 1875.

At the Crystal Palace Goat Show of 1883, and by way of example, an Irish goat came second in the class for 'horned, long-haired females'. According to the catalogue, she was 'course in quality', but more to the point gave 'abundant proof of having been a rare milker', having given 3.75 pints daily, or close to half a gallon. This female belonged to the Holmes Pegler mentioned already, he being the author of the first ever book devoted entirely to goats in the English language.

At the Goat Show held at the Royal Aquarium between the 8th and 10th of June, 1886, an Old Irish female again came second, this time in a more wide classification of 'British or crossbred, horned, she-goats'. Her name was Betsy, and she was described as being large and, this being stunning, having 'an udder little if at all inferior in size to that of a Kerry cow'. She showed her milking powers to great advantage, though with kids (note the plural) at her side, she 'resented all attempts to test its results in this respect'.

Old Irish goats were not infrequently offered for sale in the Bazaar, Exchange and Mart during this period, this including crosses between the Old Irish and Old English. A good example of this is the offer of a 'large white Irish goat, giving 4 pints daily,' for 35 shillings in 1885. The owner lived at Waltham Cross, in Hertfordshire. From a close study of the goats for sale section of the Bazaar, Exchange and Mart, it is clear that Irish goats were most saleable during the Victorian period, were to be found anywhere in the country, and would have originated from goats brought in annually by Irish drovers.

The full extent to which the Travelling Herds were affecting the native goat stock across the country did not become apparent, even so, until I accessed 'Milch Goats and their Management' by Bryan Hook, published in 1895. He mentioned, firstly, that a 'great many' Irish goats were brought into the country during the summer months, and driven through the land. There was a glimmer of light with regard to the drovers in that Hook referred to them as 'possessing the true Hibernian blarney'.

However, Hook brought some clarity to the situation with regard to the way that the Old Irish goat was influencing native goat stock by mentioning that:

By far the larger number of the goats that are to be seen passing a generally useless and unhappy existence upon any piece of waste land in our country districts are of Irish origin.

He then added that:

Probably before intercommunication became so general amongst all parts of the United Kingdom, both Wales and Scotland possessed each a breed of goats as distinctive as that of Ireland; but at the present time the all-pervading Irish type seems to have absorbed the Welsh and Scotch, for Scotland at least is the subject of yearly incursions of the itinerant Irish herds.

Here we have the view that by the 1890's the Old Irish goat had superseded the Old English in terms of being the common cottager goat of country districts throughout England, whilst the type of the Old Welsh and Old Scotch had been largely submerged by Irish imports to the extent that the Old Irish goat was the 'all-pervading type'.

The newly-formed English Goat Breeders' Association made similar comments in 1920, but before that Home Counties, the author of the Edwardian work entitled 'The Case for the Goat', this having been published in 1907, made the point that what then 'passes' for an Old English goat was often a mongrel with Irish blood in it.

As you will appreciate, the paramount importance of Irish Travelling herds to the more recent history of goats in Britain in general, and the history of the Old British landrace breeds in particular, was becoming increasingly clear, although the historical aspects of the story, this meaning the human side of the why, when and how Irish drovers brought their goats in, and the everyday stories behind their long walks throughout the land, was still something that needed to be clarified.

A flicker of light occurred when I first read *Goat Husbandry* by David Mackenzie, this being published in its first edition in 1957. In this, Mackenzie wrote that:

Irish goats were annually imported and distributed through the hill districts of Britain in nomadic droves from which the milkers were sold as they kidded. Up to the 1914 war, the Irish goatherd, shouting picturesque advertisements of his wares, squirting great jets of milk from his freshened nannies up the main street, was a regular harbinger of spring in the mountain villages.

To Pegler, the Irish drovers were ‘thoroughly Hibernian’; in the case of Hook, they had ‘Hibernian blarney’; but suddenly, and with Mackenzie, these mysterious drovers became thoroughly human, connecting with the residents of the market towns and hill and mountain villages of England and Scotland alike in such a way that it *couldn’t* be spring until they made their appearance with their travelling herds.

John Buchanan, an Edwardian goat keeper, mentioned that he would buy goats from the travelling Irish herds that occasionally came through his village, this being Clun, in Shropshire. This is historical fact that adds to our general knowledge; but his comments tell us nothing about the villager’s interactions with the Irish drovers, and equally nothing about the drovers themselves. With Mackenzie, however, the very term ‘harbinger of spring’ was inspiring enough to encourage a continuing search for historical evidence relating to the Irish drovers in their country of origin, as all the references to date related only to the United Kingdom.

As time went on, continuing research led me to the Irish droving routes in Ireland; the ports of exit to take goat stock over to Wales, Scotland and England; The discovery that the droving herds interweaved their way up and through the Hebridean islands, and as far north as the Orkneys; and then, as a complete surprise, that the Irish drovers came from one small area of Ireland, this being the Slieve Gullion Mountain area of South Armagh. Now, a story of colourful characters began to emerge, although the story behind why they took goats over to Britain was still far from clear.

At this point, I was more than happy that I had got behind the facts relating to the human aspect of Irish Travelling herds, although I had no idea what lay ahead: this being the outcomes of a visit to Slieve Gullion itself as a part of the Old Irish Goat Society’s National Survey to record what was left of the Irish goat across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland alike.

As a part of this visit, which took place in the early part of 2017, there was the opportunity to see just where the ‘Goat Men of South Armagh’ had come from.

In viewing a landscape that comprised a patchwork quilt of small enclosed fields intersected by narrow lanes that seemingly led nowhere or to isolated farmsteads; in traversing the hilly nature of a landscape that was dominated by Slieve Gullion, and which from every direction seemingly looked upwards and towards it; in coming across stretches of abandoned farmland, left to return to scrub, but speaking volumes about the lives of previous generations; and in moving around *the* mountain itself, it took little imagination to fit the drovers and the Old Irish goat alike into both landscape and community, and to picture the little local goats either tethered in the small fields close by the cottages, or let loose to find their fare on the common pasturage around the lower slopes of Slieve Gullion.

There was an evening, the air being still and a feeling of calm pervading, when we attempted to get close to a small group of feral goats that had moved off the higher slopes- this being abandoned farmland- and which were feeding on the scrub at the edge of the neat field system that ran alongside the valley road. Close by was a small farm, and in walking the narrow and winding lane, it was easy to imagine it being spring, the farm door opening, and one of the goat men of South Armagh emerging to say goodbye to his family as he set off for the west of Ireland to buy goat stock that he would then walk back across the country, and along ancient droving routes, before taking his goats aboard the mail steamer at the port in Belfast. He would then spend the summer months travelling up and through the Hebrides, ending up in the far north of Scotland, this being Stornoway in the Orkney Islands.

Too much imagination? No, because we met a man in South Armagh whose friend had a father who did just this, the history behind it being supported by a newspaper account in Stornoway itself that featured the goat men and their invaluable goats in the 1880's.

The photograph on the cover shows an Irish Travelling herd in the Market town of Dorking, in Surrey, in 1897. The men at each outer perimeter of the 33 resting goats are likely to be the drovers, and thus from South Armagh. Someone alive today in the Slieve Gullion area may have been born around 1930, and their father may have been born in the early part of the last century. Their father, marking three generations, would have been a contemporary of one of these goat men. What this adds up to is that it is not inconceivable that someone alive today in South Armagh is the granddaughter of one of these goat men, linking past with present and completing the circle of the history of the area: the goat men of South Armagh.

Before moving on to the main text, a note of caution needs to be emphasised. The researching of Irish Travelling herds has been a journey of exploration, and this means that some conclusions reached in the earlier part of the story have been contradicted or enhanced to some extent by later findings.

This tends to revolve around just who the Irish drovers were, it being thought, more accurately assumed, initially that they were stockmen or farmers from various parts of Ireland. When it came to light that they were Pahvees from the Slieve Gullion region of South Armagh, the interpretation became one that related to Irish Travellers. Then, in a further twist, it was found that the term Pahvee was unrelated to the Irish Travelling community, but referred to an aspect of the business dealings of the South Armagh community on a wider, even worldwide, scale. What is interesting here, even so, is that it is thought that Pavees, as in Irish Travellers, played some part in bringing goat stock into Britain, which would mean that although the goat men of South Armagh were the key source of Irish imports, there was an interweaving of Irish goat stock into the country districts of Britain by way of the Irish Travelling community.

It also holds true that the spa centres of an earlier period may have encouraged the introduction of goats from Ireland, although what part the goat men of South Armagh may or may not have played in this aspect of British goat history has yet to be established.

Thus, lest the reader snorts and says 'that's rubbish' in the earlier parts, it might be useful to hold back until the whole sense of the research has been considered.

BACKGROUND TO THE HISTORIC GOAT POPULATION OF IRELAND

Pegler (1886) made some very interesting comments with regard to both goat numbers and the place of the goat in Ireland.

He noted, firstly, that with regard to England, the position that the goat deserved to hold was at variance with the position that it deserved, meaning that in spite of its useful qualities, it was still far from being recognised to the extent that it merited. This was not the case in Ireland, however, and where it was highly prized for its milk. He added that in Ireland, large numbers were bred annually, and that although they led a rough life they did contribute materially in terms of their meat and milk to the welfare of the 'Irish peasant'.

In referring to the fact that records were made of the number of goats in Ireland and their distribution throughout the country on an annual basis, he contrasted this with the fact that it was to be regretted that similar returns were not compiled by the Board of Trade as to the number of goats in Great Britain, adding that application had been made to this department by the British Goat Society with this in mind, but hitherto unsuccessfully.

In fact it is almost beyond comprehension that the Board of Agriculture should carry out an annual census of goat numbers in Ireland whilst neglecting the goat stock of Great Britain in this respect; the whole issue being all the more confounded by the fact that of the European countries at that time, only Great Britain and Denmark neglected to do so.

When considering goat numbers over Europe generally at this time, we find, and according to a correspondent to the 'Live Stock Journal' of 1881, that there were 266,553 goats in Ireland, the number per cent of the population being 5.0. Norway had a goat population of 290,985 the number per cent of the population being 16.5, whilst in Switzerland, the country that had seriously begun to improve their goat stock from the 1840's, there were 374,481 goats, the number per cent of the population being 14. Overall, Prussia (6.0), the German Duchies (7.7), Italy (6.3) Spain (27.9), Portugal (23.3), and Greece (91.3) had goat populations that were greater than Ireland in terms of per cent of the population; France equalled that of Ireland (5.0); and in Sweden (2.), Russia (2.4), Finland (1.7), Austria (4.8), Hungary 3.7), Bavaria (4.0), Wurtemberg (2.1), Holland (3.9), Belgium (4.1), and Roumania (4.3) the number of goats per cent of the population was less.

In fact the Board of Agriculture carried out a census of all livestock numbers in Ireland. In respect of goats, this began in 1847 and continued year by year until 1953, there being a gap until the census was resumed in 1991.

Such figures not only give us an insight into trends over time, but are also able to give us a snapshot of the numbers and distribution of goats in Ireland in any one year. If we take 1880 by way of example, and as recorded by Pegler, we find that there was a total of 265,789 goats, their distribution being 67,493 in Leinster, 88,182 in Munster, 37,102 in Connaught, and 73,012 in Ulster. Thus, around a third (33.2%) of Ireland's goats were to be found in Munster, around a quarter (27.5%) in Ulster, another quarter (25.4%) in Leinster, and only 14% in Connaught. Basically, had we split the island of Ireland down the middle, creating two halves east and west, then around 50% of the goat population would have been in either side.

The figure for 1880 (265,789) differed from that for 1872 (238,961), there having been an increase of 27,592 goats over the nine years.

Taking the following year in respect of the main consideration, this being 1881, we find that the figure is 266,553, an overall decrease of 1,569. By province, however, only that of Leinster had an actual decrease (accounting for the total loss), the figure being 65,924. In the case of the other three provinces, Munster now had 88,877 goats, an increase of 695; Connaught 37,589, and increase of 487, and Ulster 74,163, an increase of 1,151.

How these figures were arrived at is difficult to envisage. Stock was exported on an annual basis, animals died of old age, kids were born and in the main killed so that the family could have all the milk, although others would be retained for the future. Apropos of export, large numbers left the country annually, there being a figure for the two years under discussion that in only three weeks in July, 1880, as many as nine hundred head were exported. And yet the figure for, say, Ulster in 1881 wasn't just 74,000, not even 74,100 or 74,160, but 74, 163. What we can be sure of, is that on the very day that these figures were released, a goat would have dropped dead somewhere in Ireland, and thus reduced the total by one.

By county, and rounding off our snapshot of a finite period in time, we find that goats were most numerous in Kerry, with 23,442 animals, and Cork, with 22, 857. Then came County Meath with 15,442, County Tipperary, with 12,952, and County Monaghan, with 12,305.

Before we move on to consider the whole period from 1847 to 1920, a timescale during which either all or the vast majority of goats in Ireland belonged to the Old Irish breed, we need firstly to dispel an oft-quoted myth with regard to Irish goat exports. This is used to give some idea of how many goats there must have been in Ireland at this particular time, i.e. if this many goats could be shipped to Britain, just how many goats could there be in Ireland.

The quote concerns the "fact" that in 1926 a total of 241,427 goats were exported from Ireland to England. Such an idea is totally ludicrous, although it has been, and still is, quoted and re-quoted to the point that it is never questioned.

The present writer has reviewed the literature in which this statement is alluded to, and then attempted to trace back to its origin. It would seem that it originated with Whitehead (1972), and is to be found in *The Wild Goats of Great Britain and Ireland*, chapter 2- *The Origin of Wild Goats*- paragraph 4, page 32. This reads:

The importation of goats from Ireland still continued after World War I, and as late as 1926 the total of goats exported from Leinster, Munster, Connaught and Ulster into England was 241,427 head, a decrease of less than 10 per cent on the figures for 1881.

Clearly, Whitehead is maintaining that Ireland had *exported* huge numbers of goats annually over a very long period of time, quoting figures that would amount to well over a quarter of a million (around 266,000) in 1881, and just under a quarter of a million (just over 240,000) forty-six years later in 1926. This begs the question: just how large was the Irish goat population during this period, and what percentage of this total number were actually exported on an annual basis?

We know the answer to the first question, of course, and this due to the records relating to the annual census by the Board of Agriculture. The greatest number of goats to be

found in Ireland during this forty-six year period was in excess of 336,000 (1891), the smallest number 245,000 (1920). Obviously, Whitehead must have been quoting the actual goat population for the years in question, the alternative being that in the years 1881 and 1926 alone, the whole of the Irish goat population was shipped to England enmass!

In regard to the actual numbers that were exported, there is, at the present time, no way of knowing. We can, even so, make an intelligent guess. It is recorded that 900 Old Irish goats were exported over a three week period in 1880. Pegler (1886), for it was he who gave us this information, stated that 'as many' as 900 left Ireland during this period, seemingly implying that this was more than was usual. However, we have a record also of a travelling herd comprising 600 animals that left Belfast on the mail steamer in July, 1887, and which made its way to the Orkney Islands. It is therefore all too likely that 900 goats leaving Ireland in three weeks wouldn't be that unusual. If, on this basis, we assume that the Irish travelling goat season began in the spring (these herds being the harbingers of spring to many a village in England), and went through to the autumn, we have a total of 26 weeks during which goats were exported. Thus, between March and August of any year, upwards of 7,800 goats would have left Ireland. Taking the total figure for the Irish goat population of 1881 into account, this being 265,789, the total numbers of animals that left the country would have amounted to 2.9% of the population.

Looking at this another way, had Whitehead been correct when he stated that 241,427 goats were exported in 1926, the sum total of goats in Ireland at the beginning of that year would have been 8,885,100.

If we analyse goat numbers, year by year and to the nearest thousand, between 1847 and 1953, we find that the overall pattern is somewhat unexpected. We might reasonably have assumed that the total number of goats over this period would have declined steadily, or remained stable during the Nineteenth Century, only to have declined in the following one, or even to have increased after the Board of Agriculture put some effort into popularising the goat from 1912. What we find, however, is that numbers dipped and rose periodically but unevenly on a regular basis over a period of nearly eighty years between 1847 and 1926, following which there was a steady decline until 1953, this being a secondary block of twenty-seven years.

The figures are as follows (after Werner, 2014):

Dates	Duration	Figures	Increase	Decease
1847-1854	7 years	164,000-311,000	147,000	
1855-1863	9 years	311,000-166,000		145,000
1864-1875	12 years	166,000-271,000	105,000	
1876	1 year	271,000-264,000		7,000
1877-1878	2 years	264,000-279,000	15,000	
1879-1884	6 years	279,000-254,000		25,000
1885-1891	7 years	254,000-336,000	82,000	
1892-1895	4 years	336,000-305,000		31,000
1896	1 year	305,000-306,000	1000	

1897-1898	2 years	306,000-296,000		10,000
1899-1901	3 years	296,000-312,000	16,000	
1902-1908	7 years	312,000-246,000		66,000
1909	1 year	246,000-252,000	6,000	
1910	1 year	252,000-243,000		9,000
1911	1 year	243,000-258,000	15,000	
1912-1915	4 years	258,000-243,000		15,000
1916	1 year	243,000-293,000	50,000	
1917	1 year	293,000-269,000		24,000
1918	1 year	269,000-277,000	80,000	
1919	1 year	277,000-233,000		44,000
1920-1921	2 years	233,000-269,000	36,000	
1922	1 year	269,000-260,000		9,000
1923	1 year	260,000-265,000	5,000	
1924-1925	2 years	265,000-232,000		33,000
1926	1 year	232,000-241,000	9,000	
1927-1938	12 years	241,000-148,000		93,000
1939	1 year	148,000-150,000	2,000	
1940-1953	14 years	150,000-55,000		95,000

So far as the present writer is aware, there has been no attempt to marry the above figures with social, political, economic and agricultural changes over the same period, and thus find some explanation as to why the total number of goats in Ireland should have increased annually over the seven years between 1847 and 1854, then go into a consistent decline for the next nine years, after which there was a steady increase over twelve years, this taking us to 1875, and following which and over the next quarter of a century, there were eight periods of decline and increase, lasting from between one and seven years, that takes us to the end of the Nineteenth Century. Amazingly, between 1847 and 1863, Ireland gained 147,000 goats over nine years, then lost 145,000 over the next nine.

During the time of the introduction of foreign goat stock into the land, this being around 1900, until the decision was made in 1912 to improve the Old Irish breed by the use of improved foreign sires, the goat population rose and fell over five cycles lasting again between one and seven years.

From then onwards and until 1953, a period of around forty years, these now familiar cycles of increase and decrease occurred regularly- there being thirteen in all- the shortest being a year, whilst the longest (from 1940 to 1953), and this being a decrease, lasted for fourteen years.

When looking at actual numbers, why should there have been only 166,000 goats in Ireland in 1847, but 147,000 more than this seven years later, making the total number in 1854 311,000? Again, why should it be that the goat population of 1863 had dropped back to practically the same number of animals as was to be found in Ireland in 1847, and thus sixteen years earlier?

There were periods when the goat population rose notably: 1864 to 1875 with an increase of 105,000; 1885 to 1891 with an increase of 82,000, and an increase of 36,000 in the one year 1920-1921. Then, numbers plummeted equally dramatically over this period: 145,000 between 1855 and 1863; 31,000 between 1892 and 1895, 93,000 between 1927 and 1938, and 95,000 between 1940 and 1953.

And then there are the strange events during the First World War. In 1914 there were nearly a quarter of a million goats in Ireland (242,000). This was within a four-year period (1912-1915) when there had been a decrease of 15,000. Then, and inexplicably, the population had gone up by 50,000 in one year (1916), dropped by 24,000 the following year, then gained 80,000 by the end of the war in 1918.

The only comment that has been noted to date with regard to cause and effect over this period is that the Irish goat population rose in the decades following the famine, although this appears not to be so, even so.

In attempting some explanation with regard to the fluctuating fortunes of the goat in Ireland, it might be useful, firstly, to come to some conclusion as to why goats might be liked or disliked (or popular or otherwise, if you will), and then go on to look at how the Irish rural scene changed over this period: socially, economically and agriculturally, whilst not forgetting the Great Famine or Great Hunger period of mass starvation, disease and a depopulating of the land between 1845 and 1852.

In terms of a general prejudice, irrational or otherwise, the goat might have been disliked for the following reasons:

‘pungent odour’ of males / flavour of the milk / mischievous and active

Destroy hedges / break down walls / bark fruit trees

Leap boundaries / desecrate gardenstroubles relating to tethering

Milk quality affected by food intake / association with poorer classes

Disliked by landowners generally / not considered a ‘farm’ animal

No history of ‘improvement’

On the other hand, and according to Victorian thinking, there were many reasons why it should have been popular:

Very hardy / very tameable / need for milk amongst poor /

‘useful’ / prolific / milk nutritional for cottier /

Milk better than that of cow / can utilize tracts of waste /

Well-suited to commonage system / cheap to keep /

Kids edible / horns boiled for soup / hooves stewed for jelly /

Suet for pudding / hair for stuffing / skins for rugs /

Milk for cream / meat gamey / Easier on digestion than cow’s milk /

T. B. free / thrive on land that cow can’t utilize /

Several goats flourish where only one cow can be kept /

Several goats give continuous milk supply / takes kindly to human care /

Affects the cure of a kicking horse in a stable / prevents contagious abortion in cows / A generally healthy animal can pick up a living generally /

Milk delicious / kid preferable to lamb / the poor man’s cow

The cottier’s cow / housing less elaborate than that for cows

What might have worked in favour of the goat, it might be suggested, is the following:

- An abundance of waste land that was under-used and/or neglected, and which could happily support goats
- A healthy commonage system that encouraged free-ranging goat herds belonging to individual owners
- A sub-class of rural workers who valued the goat for its milk and meat, these being agricultural labourers, small tenant farmers and cottiers.
- A class of rural workers who either did not have enough land to support a cow, or no land at all
- An adherence to the old country ways and traditions that associated goats with preventing contagious abortion in cattle, staggers in horses, and were able to have a calming effect on stabled horses along with eating any potentially dangerous plants mixed up in the hay
- A denuding of rural areas of milk due to this being taken regularly out of swathes of the countryside in favour of its distribution in towns and supporting creameries
- A decrease in the number of reasonable-sized mixed economy farms of a kind that would support sheep, cattle and arable

- The cottier system, aligned with tillage above pasture
- A stable rural population that included labourers and smallholders as the majority
- Stable weather conditions
- Harsh times and conditions (weather and economic) that meant that the poorer classes had to be versatile to stave off starvation, this including the most versatile of domestic stock, the goat

What might have worked against the goat included:

- A hand-me-down to employees prejudice against the goat in respect of the larger landowners who viewed it as a menace to hedges and trees, and who might even have thought of the goat as symbolic of a class of people whom they barely understood and despised even more. Apropos of this, the Irish landlord William Sydney Clements, 3rd Earl of Leitrim, was assassinated on April 3rd, 1878, even the Royal Irish Constabulary having little sympathy with regard to his passing. His name had become a byword for severity and intransigence, and the reasons for his dramatic passing out of this world were that for years he had rent-racked his tenants horsewhipped them as he rode by, forced himself upon their daughters, *and shot their goats and pigs*.
- There were rules with regard to whether or not tenants could keep goats or not, and with respect to the 3rd Earl of Leitrim again, he forced one of his tenants, who had kept a herd of goats without permission, *to kill them all before his eyes*
- A conflict with farming interests in respect of dry stone walls
- The reclaiming of waste ground for permanent pasture
- A focus on cow's milk
- An increase in small-scale farming that would have undervalued the goat generally
- A denuding of the land of common woodland
- An increase in small farms that specialised in sheep, cattle and arable, and thus had hedges, fences and crops to protect.
- The fragmenting, nay even devastation, of the landless labourer, cottier and small tenant farmer classes due to socio-political and famine related reasons that significantly depopulated rural areas
- A reduction of arable farming in favour of pasture and livestock production
- A change in the balance of the rural population away from labourers, cottiers and smallholders in favour of farm owners

If we take the Nineteenth Century in relation to significant changes and developments within the rural economy that may have affected the goat population, we find that in the earlier part of the century, and leading up to the Great Famine between 1845 and 1852, the farming population of Ireland was a little over 1.5 million (1,510,000). This was divided into five classes, there being around 50,000 wealthy farmers with an average of eighty acres per family (3.3% of the total); 10,000 strong farmers with an average of 100 acres per family (making up 0.7%); 200,000 family farmers averaging twenty acre farms

(13.2%), 250,000 smallholders with an average of five acres per household (16.6%); and one million labourers/cottiers (66.2% of the total) who either worked for a wage or in exchange for a plot of ground on which they could grow food to feed the family.

Significantly, this would mean that four out of five people (or 82.8%) living in rural Ireland at this time had every reason to keep a goat, this animal being either very useful or even vital in supporting the landless labourer who had access to waste ground, the cottier with his small plot, or the smallholders with limited land and the need to be versatile in feeding a family. Also, access to commonage generally would have encouraged goat keeping. This is balanced by the fact that between 1815 and 1845, an estimated 1.5 million people left Ireland, the country losing 20% of its population to famine and emigration between 1841 and 1851. Along with this there was a massive decrease in the number of farms of 15 acres and less (largely the smallholder class), and whilst the census of 1841 recorded that 45% of land holdings were less than five acres, this had dropped to 15% by the census of 1851. As a consequence, an important part of the rural population was lost to goat keeping.

With the Great Famine, and because the potato wasn't just a staple food but a means of exchange and barter in relation to services, the whole system of farmers hiring cottiers for so many days work in exchange for working on their arable land in exchange for a small plot of otherwise fallow ground collapsed, and along with it the customary importance of intensive tillage.

After 1850, the whole system of Irish agriculture was reorganised away from tillage, and in the direction of stock raising, there being an emphasis on cattle. Between 1851 and 1871, the land that had been under tillage dropped by 30%, whilst the total area that was devoted to grazing and fodder production rose by almost 20%. This shift from tillage to stock raising resulted in a sharp decline in the rural population, this being marked between 1851 and 1861. This trend in relation to a declining rural population was exasperated by the general difficulties in forming new households and thus keep alive stable rural communities, the reasons for this being largely the fact that there was an elimination of the custom of subdivision in households, and fewer and fewer opportunities to find work. Thus, increasingly there was no place for paid employment.

The period between 1859 and 1864 was one of bad growing seasons due to poor weather.

Overall, therefore, and in the wake of the Great Famine, we find that there was a great increase in the amount of land that was laid down to permanent grass, this being either for pasture or hay, and a doubling of the number of sheep and cattle between 1851 and 1869. Taking the period from 1851 to 1901, we find that the number of cattle trebled, of pigs and horses doubled, whilst the number of sheep increased four-fold in number per 1,000 acres of tillage. Significantly, nearly two million acres of waste was reclaimed between 1845 and 1865. There was also a significant decline in agricultural employment, aligned to widespread clearances and evictions- this reaching its highest level between 1847 and 1850 (a total of 50,000)- a motivator being the need to make farms larger to accommodate the move towards pasture as opposed to arable.

Figures for the cattle and sheep population of Ireland between 1847 and 1950 are of some interest in relation to the foregoing historical overview.

When figures were first recorded, this being in 1847, Ireland had a cattle population of 2.5 million and a sheep population of 2 million, along with 164,000 goats, there being 15.2

cattle and 12.2 sheep for every goat. Taking the changes over a five year cycle, we find the following:

Date	Cattle per goat	Sheep per goat
1850	14.5	9.3
1855	12.5	12.7
1860	18.6	18.3
1865	20.5	21.6
1870	17.9	20.5
1875	15.2	15.7
1880	14.7	13.4
1885	16.	13.2
1890	13	13.2
1895	14.3	12.8
1900	15.	14.3
1905	16.4	13.2
1910	19.3	16.4
1915	19.9	14.8
1920	20.6	14
1925	20.1	14.2
1930	22.8	20.4
1935	29.6	23.7
1940	33.3	27.4
1945	57	35.9
1950	90	52.6

Between 1850 and 1953, the cattle population of Ireland rose steadily, there being just over 3 million in 1850, rising to 3.5 million by 1855. By 1872, there were 4 million, the figure exceeding 5 million by 1914, and 5.33 million in 1953.

In 1850, the sheep population of Ireland was 1.8 million, there being over 2 million a year later. In 1853, the figure had reached over 3 million, there being 3.75 million in 1854, over 4 million in 1866, and 5 million in 1868. Numbers then dropped, there being 3 million in 1882. By 1953, the figure exceeded 5 million again.

The trend in terms of cattle and sheep numbers was steadily upwards, although the figures in relation to goat number trends tell an interesting story. Towards the end of the Great Famine, the cattle population in relation to that of the goat had risen, whilst in relation to that of the sheep it had dropped. From then onwards, and when considering cattle, we find that goat numbers were higher, proportionate to cattle numbers in 1850 compared to that for 1847, whilst they dropped during the period up to 1855, rose to 1860, dropped again to 1865, rose again to 1895, and dropped again to 1900. With a consistently rising cattle population, the dips and troughs reflect the changing fortunes of goat numbers over this period.

In the case of sheep, as compared to goats, we find that goat numbers went up proportionate to the number of sheep between 1847 and 1850, then dropped to 1855, rising again to 1860, but then dropping again to 1865. There was a consistent rise then, and until 1895, following which there was a drop to 1900. Again, and when comparing the trends between sheep and goats, we find that the sheep population rose overall, but went down between 1868 and 1882, this being a period when goat numbers dipped and rose four times.

Putting all this together, we can divide the Nineteenth Century into three main periods as it might have affected trends in goat numbers: 1800-1844, 1845-1852, 1853-1901.

During the first phase (1800-1844), it would seem that everything was favourable for the maintenance, and possibly also for an increase, in goat numbers. Positively, there was a large and stable rural population in tune with goat keeping, this being as many as 80% of farming families, be they owners, tenants or labourers; a huge amount of arable land that encouraged a cottier system; a large labouring population; a commonage system; large areas of waste and underused land, and a significant number (around 30% of the rural farming community) of small-scale farmers. Against this was a prejudice against the goat in relation to a class of larger landowners who controlled the lives of their tenants in large degree- and might even ban goat keeping altogether- along with a generally declining population countrywide.

During the period of the Great Famine (1845-1854), there is every reason to assume that goat keeping went down, even plummeted. Certainly, and as a generalization, there was even more need to keep goats in the wake of the collapse of the potato as a staple diet and the need to survive at a subsistence level. But with the collapse of tillage, and the cottier system along with it; starvation and emigration, and thus a reduction in the rural population; forcible evictions, and a rise in pastoralism based upon livestock that reduced further the need for labourers, it would have been reasonable to assume that the goat population would have gone down rather than up.

Between 1852 and 1901, this being the post famine years and onwards, everything again would appear to be negative in relation to the prosperity of the goat in Ireland. There was a continued rise in sheep and cattle numbers, emphasising the move away from tillage to pasture; two million acres of waste that was not at all wasteful in terms of the goat was reclaimed; the plight of the agricultural labourer continued in earnest; evictions remained a feature of the rural landscape; farms needed to be larger; the number of sheep went up four-fold and those of cattle and horses doubled, giving less room for goats on commonage; the 'upgrading' of the farming system resulted in an increase in hedges and fences and the importance of walls, in other words anything that the goat had a reputation for destroying; and the number of pigs doubled. The significance of pig numbers might, at first glance, appear to not have had a significance, although historically

pigs were kept as a matter of routine, both amongst the poorer classes farmers generally down to the smallest of farms. Not only were they kept for family use, but as a means of providing some income. That numbers doubled during this period (there being no commercial outlet at this time) might have some bearing on where the rural population was putting its energy in terms of survival, although it does not seem to have affected the goat in terms of overall numbers.

Thus, we have three distinct periods during the Nineteenth Century in which goat keeping would appear to have been very favourable until 1845, and then gone into a steady decline for the rest of the century. What we find, however, is something very different. At the end of phase 1, the goat population was 164,000; during the period of the famine, it went up rather than down, and although we have looked at the socio-economic, along with depopulation reasons why it should have gone down, perhaps the answer is as simple as a mantra that dictates that when all else fails, the people of Ireland turned to the goat to get them through yet another crisis of life and death. With the post-famine period, we again find no consistency in what was happening, the population increasing and decreasing without being swayed by larger events. In fact rather than go through a steady decline, the population went as high as 311,000 in 1855, then reaching its greatest recorded number after following a rather bumpy road in 1892, this being 336,000.

Perhaps, in the end, we can acknowledge that the goat population of Ireland relates to a tautology: numbers went up and down because they went up and down. This, being positive, may well be a spur for further investigation of this phenomena.

When we turn the century, we find that the goat population of Ireland went through a regular cycle of increase and decline over no less than sixteen periods. The first phase lasted from 1902 to 1926, there being no less than fourteen cycles of increase and decrease that, with one exception of four years, lasted for either one or two years. Then, from 1927 to 1938, a period of eleven years, there was a consistent period of decline. Goat numbers went up during the one year period of 1939, then there was consistent decrease in numbers, and over fourteen years, until goat keeping in Ireland collapsed.

This isn't to say that numbers were not reasonable during this period. In 1902 there were 300,000; between 1908 and 1916, around a quarter of a million; in 1917 close to 300,000 again; in 1918 and 1919 around a quarter of a million. From 1920 to 1926 there was roughly between 230,000 and 270,000; between 1938 and 1940 around the 150,000 mark, and when goat keeping generally collapsed in Ireland, there were 55,000 animals. This is of particular interest as when the goat population of England revived to around 60,000, this was considered to be something of a success story.

This, then, is the background to goatkeeping in Ireland in relation to numbers: why it was kept, how it fitted into the rural economy, and aspects of why it might, at times, have not been popular. With this in mind, we move on to consider the historic importance of one aspect of Irish goat history, this being the story behind the Irish Travelling herds.

IRISH TRAVELLING HERDS: THE EVIDENCE RELATING MAINLY TO BRITISH SOURCES

It is more than possible that prior to the incursions of what was to become known as Irish travelling herds into Scotland, Wales and England, the Old Irish breed was to reach the shores of Britain as a consequence of a burgeoning fad for whey drinking. Whey relates to cheese making, and is the thin and watery part that is left over once the thicker part, or curd, has coagulated.

The late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries witnessed the emergence of whey drinking spas across Britain, there being a belief at this time that it was health-giving. Feehan (2003), amongst others, has suggested that an increasing demand for this product led to an equal demand for goats, this being satisfied, at least in part, by the rounding up large herds of Old Irish goats and their transportation to the British Isles

Newcastle in the mid-Eighteenth Century was an embryonic watering place, the area roundabout being famous then for goats' whey. Summer was the season for its drinking, it being noted that a great deal of 'company' met for that purpose, with little huts being built for their reception, and amusements such as balls, cards and music laid on. Later, spas at Buxton, Ballynahinch and Lisdoonvarna came into being. This region is mentioned in particular as the College Valley is not too far from here, and its feral goat herd has been linked, in speculation it must be admitted, with the rise of whey-drinking spas as well as later escapees from Irish travelling herds. Caution needs to be exercised here, as the herd has also been assumed to have originated with the monks of Lindisfarne, and thus places such origins in the realm of myth/legend/speculation, and possibly even idle gossip.

Whitehead (1972) offered the view that in relation to whey drinking, Irish goats were famed for their milk, and that this meant that importations were frequent. As to where they went, he pointed out that a whey-drinking centre had been established at Leswalt, Wigtownshire, by the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and a goat milk spa at Blairlogie, near Stirling, about the same time. Spas were also established in the Clackmannanshire foothills, and on the Isle of Arran. In Wales, there had been a popular resort at Abergavenny during the Eighteenth Century.

Whitehead also commented that to reach these whey-drinking centres, the new intakes of goats would often have to travel long distances if they had been shipped from Ireland, and that some would escape to live feral. There is a suspicion here, even so, that Whitehead was blurring this era with the later one of Irish travelling herds.

Travelling herds, by which we mean the importation of large numbers of Old Irish goats into England and Scotland on an annual basis during much of the Nineteenth Century and onwards until at least the inter-war period, is a vitally important aspect of Old Irish goat history, and not least of all because we are able to fit the breed into the wider historical mosaic of droving generally, as well as add to our knowledge of the breed's phenotype.

There are difficulties with regard to the interpretation of the evidence, however, and not least of all because our core knowledge stems from writings relating to what happened to the travelling herds once they had been disembarked at British docks, this meaning that until recently the present writer was unable to unearth any worthwhile information

relating to the story behind these goats and their drovers before they crossed the Irish Sea.

Pegler (1886) pointed out that large droves of Irish goats made an appearance in most market towns of England and Scotland on an annual basis, and that the herdsman was 'always a thorough Hibernian'. In mentioning where in Ireland goats 'most abound', this information being found in the 'Livestock journal' of 1881, Pegler pointed out that Kerry and Cork had the most goats, followed by Counties Cavan, Tipperary and Monaghan. Pertinent to our discussion, he added that large numbers are exported annually from *these* counties to England, it being a fact that during three weeks in July, 1880, these exports amounted to 'as many as 900 head'.

These herdsman were insistent that their goats were 'Welsh', although the reason for this eluded Pegler, and despite the fact that he had made some attempt to 'discover' what lay behind this assertion. He did, even so, offer the opinion that it might have been because these Irish travelling herds had been landed in Wales on their arrival from Ireland. A more likely explanation, even so, would have been that these itinerant drovers believed that they were more likely to have attracted buyers for their stock if the potential customer believed that their goats were Welsh rather than Irish. This would imply that the Welsh breed was more productive, although the Old Irish goat of Pegler's day had a reputation for being a good milker, the yield being comparatively poor, whilst the Welsh was said to have been of not much value for its milk, and additionally not remaining any length of time in profit. What this leaves us with is the possibility that there was a general prejudice against the Irish breed, although this is to a large extent negated by the fact that these Irish drovers would seem to have happily disposed of their stock year by year, otherwise the journey would not have been worthwhile.

Pegler seems to have been somewhat wary of the claims made by these drovers generally, adding that calling their animals Welsh was not the only false statement made by them.

Hook (1896) is most enlightening in respect of the way in which these Irish drovers were able to pass on their stock with promises of a utopian goat keeping future for anyone who purchased their animals.

He stated, firstly, that a great many Irish goats crossed 'St. George's Channel' in the summer months, and were then driven through the country to be sold off by drovers who possessed 'the true Hibernian powers of Blarney'.

Certainly, in Hook's opinion, there were rare examples of animals that yielded a large quantity of milk, and he had seen some very useful animals that had been purchased from these itinerant herds; but he extolled, even so, caution in respect of being taken in by the claims of the drovers, not least of all that their animals would give half a gallon a day and live anywhere and anyhow. Also, the unwary buyer might be taken in by heavy bags of milk that were really the accumulation of days of not being milked, and the fact that aged goats might be passed off as young. In the latter respect, it was the claim of Hook that he had seen many more that were aged in these travelling herds than were very useful. For this reason, he advised that Irish droving goats should be purchased with caution, and particularly with some knowledge of their age, as shown by their teeth.

Overall, Hook painted a pretty picture of Irish drovers who were able to pass off aged and inferior animals as useful and excellent milkers, and he believed, and unfortunately, that such 'inferior animals' as these Irish travelling goats were inclined to colour the reputation

of goats generally and in a negative way. If the potential purchaser were to be over-sanguine when purchasing Irish imports, they were bound to be disappointed: the young and abundant milker turning out to be aged and of a wild nature, their produce being scant, whilst even the rare example that yielded a large quantity of milk would only do so for a few months after kidding, it then becoming impossible to induce these animals to breed unless their half-wild nature prompted it. Along with this, they were said to indulge in 'mischievous habits,' and any form of milk production in the winter was beyond their power.

Putting all this into perspective, Hook's book was entitled 'Milch Goats and their Management', and he was writing largely for a goat keeping audience that was middle class and members of the British Goat Society. Goat improvement by way of showing and the institution of a Herd Book had by the time of his writing been going on for a little over twenty years, and the extent to which the Old Irish goat deviated from the ideal may be gleaned from hook's comment that 'the Irish goat may be taken as the antithesis of what the English fancier desires. Of small size, with long shaggy coat and large horns, it has little but its low price to recommend it'.

What was lost sight of here, was the fact that the improved goat stock of the day was all very well for those enthusiasts who had the time and money to spend on it, and who valued a show ring rosette as much as milk in the pail, although it was most certainly not best suited to the needs of the everyday goatkeeper, be they the cottager or farm labourer, who expected their goat to be out in all weathers, tethered on a common or under a hedge, and which despite benign neglect was expected to provide enough milk for the family at little to no cost.

Little wonder then that, and as Hook pointed out, 'by far the larger number of goats that are seen passing a generally useless and unhappy existence upon any piece of waste land in our country districts are of Irish origin'. This was not only true of England, for Hook went on to point out that 'at the present time the all-pervading Irish type seems to have absorbed the Welsh and Scotch, for Scotland at least is subject to yearly incursions of the itinerant Irish herds'. Sadly, no records of goat numbers in England were kept at this time, although we know that in the earlier part of the Nineteenth Century the goat was considered to be uncommon and becoming rarer, there being large swathes of country districts where goats were hardly to be found. The present writer has calculated that upwards of 2% of the Irish goat population was imported into Britain annually, this being as many as close to 7,000 goats in some years; and if we make a guess that even following the Victorian Goat Revival- which after all was restricted to the Middle and upper classes, along with the aristocracy- there were only around 50,000 goats in England, an annual increment of upwards of 7,000 goats would have been well on the way to swamping the indigenous goat population and given credence to Hook's assertion that the larger number of goats in England were of Irish origin. Little wonder, then, that the Irish goat was believed to have been the all-pervading type in Scotland and Wales in that it had absorbed these breeds. In respect of this, a guesstimate that England had 50,000 goats in the mid-Victorian period may well be wildly missing the mark, as the total population of goats on agricultural holdings as late as 1954 was less than 22,000.

John G. Buchanan, writing in *Home Counties*, 1907, stated that he was by then a goat-keeper of many years. In answering a question relating to his experience of different breeds, he stated that he had started goatkeeping by purchasing nannies out of travelling Irish herds which occasionally came through his village, this being Clun, in Shropshire.

Although he had often heard the Irish breed decried, he affirmed that his own experience of them was on the whole a fairly satisfactory one. It was his view that he had been blessed by nature with something of an eye for livestock, which meant that he was nearly always able to pick out animals that proved to be good milkers, these giving half a gallon a day when in full milk. Interestingly, he considered the drawback to these goats from his own point of view was that sometimes the goat he wanted was horned, he preferring hornless. Another factor mitigating against them was their long hair, this giving him too much trouble in combing and dressing. The outcome was that he drifted into keeping Toggenburgs, and remained faithful to this breed.

Buchanan thus affirmed that there were good goats that peaked at half a gallon in these Irish travelling herds, and that possibly such good milkers were a little less rare than had been the experience of Hook. He also described these goats as being long-haired, and implied that the best nannies in these travelling herds were usually hornless, and therefore only occasionally horned. That his experience of the breed in the hands of these Irish drovers was a fairly satisfactory one would seem to be linked with his ability to pick out the choice stock in a herd that included a range of animals from the inferior to excellent milkers.

Mackenzie (1957) gives a rather more romanticised view of Irish droving in that he described how Irish goats were imported annually and distributed throughout all the hill districts of Britain in nomadic droves from which the milkers were sold off as they kidded. He then added that up until 1914 (significantly the outset of the Great War), the Irish goatherd was a regular harbinger of spring in the mountain villages as he picturesquely advertised his wares by squirting great jets of milk from his freshened nannies as they moved up the main street.

Lastly, when focussing on England, Whitehead (1972) adds to our knowledge in that in making reference to the large droves that were driven through Wales en route to England, he noted that one of the last droves to pass through South Wales consisted of some 300 'beasts' which were being driven from Cardigan to Kent in the autumn of 1891. It took three men, three boys and five dogs to 'control them', and Whitehead speculated that some of this herd may well have escaped to go feral.

Lastly, We need to give some thought to the fact that not only were Irish travelling herds a feature of mainland Scotland, but a profound influence on the goat stock of both the Inner and Outer Hebrides.

Steamships landed Irish traveling herds at Stromness, where they were walked up the Mull of Kintyre and into the Southern Uplands and onwards to the Border hills region, whilst Oban was the gateway to the Highlands. What isn't generally taken into account, however, is that Irish mail steamers regularly plied up the west coast of Scotland, weaving their way between the Inner and the Outer Hebrides until they reached the Orkney Islands, these lying off the extreme North-East of the Scottish mainland.

In July, 1887, such a mail steamer birthed at Stromness in the Orkney Islands, from which was offloaded 140 Irish goats (The Orcadian, 1887). Nearly forty of these animals were sold within the week, and from 30 shillings and upwards each, it being confidently predicted that the remainder would quickly be disposed of in Orkney, and for the simple reason that the milk of these animals was considered to be very superior, 'this article of diet' being sold there as "pure milk". What is of particular interest, however, is that these 140 goats were the remains of about 600 that had been forwarded from Belfast,

meaning that the other 360 had already been disembarked enroute. This, of course, is a good example of the way in which Irish goats infiltrated the Hebrides, and may have had a profound influence on both the domestic and feral goats stock of these islands.

What, then, can we learn of the practice of importing Old Irish goats into Britain over an extended period of time from these English and Scottish sources?

Firstly, there can be little doubt that the herders were always Irish, Pegler describing them as thoroughly Hibernian, Hook as simply Hibernian, and Mackenzie as Irish.

What they were is implicit in the fact that they appeared each year with herds of goats, Pegler calling them herdsmen, Hook drovers, and Mackenzie goatherds.

As to their character, Pegler made a point of pointing out that they lied about the origin of their stock and exaggerated in other ways, whilst Hook was quite scathing about the way in which these drovers used blarney as a selling tactic, passing off scant milkers as good milch goats and aged animals as young. Blarney, of course, implies charm, and it would seem that the drovers were able to appear to be quite picturesque, as Mackenzie would have it, when applying selling tactics. Overall, there is the implication that these drovers used a mixture of charm and roguishness to offload their animals, it being likely that this was adjusted to suit the vulnerability of the potential buyer, as in know your customer.

Where in Ireland their goats came from wasn't mentioned at all, and where they were destined for in Britain isn't altogether clear, although the reference to 'itinerant' herds by Hook would suggest that these drovers had a definable itinerary, year upon year. That Mackenzie called them 'nomadic droves' may not necessarily imply that their routes were whimsical and subject to change. What is clear, even so, is that these travelling herds appeared in most market towns of England and Scotland according to Pegler, were distributed throughout the hill districts of Britain/mountain villages according to Mackenzie, and were driven through the country according to Hook. It is therefore safe to assert that there was hardly a settlement in Britain that did not have experience of the arrival of a large herd of Old Irish goats for sale.

When they came was clearly annually, there being a general agreement on this, whilst there is no consensus on the time of the year. Pegler makes no mention of the season, although he notes that goats were imported in July; Mackenzie places their arrival at the beginning of the spring; Hook mentions only the summer months, and Whitehead alludes to a travelling herd crossing Wales and England in the autumn. Thus, only the winter season is not covered by these writers.

Why they came should be obvious, it being to sell goats at a low price in the case of Hook, and to sell off the milkers as they kidded according to Mackenzie.

The size and numbers of these travelling herds is of particular interest, the general inference being that they were commonplace and quite large. Whilst Mackenzie alludes only to droves, this word of itself implying a goodly number, both Pegler and Whitehead speak of large droves, although the latter writer might well be quoting the former. Hook speaks of a great many herds, and we can get some idea of their individual sizes by reference to 600 goats being exported from Belfast in 1887 and a herd of 300 goats being landed in Wales in 1891.

As to what they were selling, they were most definitely purebred Old Irish goats, both Pegler and Hook referencing their singularity of type, whilst the description offered by

Hook- this being small with long shaggy coats and large horns- is as good a way of describing the Irish breed at this time as it gets.

By implication, only nannies were to be found in these travelling herds, the idea being to sell them off as they kidded. That they were typically aged, with a half-wild nature, mischievous habits and scant produce does not in any way accord with descriptions of the breed generally in Ireland at this time, this painting a picture of productivity and a tame nature, and one wonders whether the goats brought over were more often than not the cheap rejects that were gathered up in villages, on farms, and at markets especially with the intention of exporting them to Britain. However, all is not always as it would seem, Buchanan confirming that these herds included excellent milkers, and there will be more to ponder on this subject when we consider early photographs of Irish Travelling herds in Britain.

It is clear, therefore, that although travelling herds were a focus for English writers on goatkeeping during the Victorian period, we know little to nothing from these sources about the drovers themselves and the routes that they took across Britain to sell off their stock.

Likewise, when moving on to give thought to where these travelling herds had come from, the British sources are in no way helpful in answering the basic questions of just who these Irish drovers were, where in Ireland they came from, the source of their stock, and the routes that they used to move their animals to the ports for embarkation. By implication, they earned their livelihood by selling goats, made a better living by selling their stock in Britain rather than Ireland, and brought enough goats over to make it worthwhile monetarily, but not so many that the herd could be unmanageable.

In attempting to come to terms with where in Ireland the stock was purchased to assemble a travelling herd for export, the possibilities relating to markets in particular were investigated.

Traditionally, markets were held weekly in Ireland, there being a recognized sequence in relation to the sale of goods and livestock, this usually terminating in horse-racing and sports.

A useful example of the way in which a market town developed is to be found in that of Lisburn, this developing in the Seventeenth Century as a market centre situated at the junction to Dublin and the West of Ireland. By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, Lisburn still hosted two large fairs each year, these having been established in 1627, it being here that livestock such as cattle, sheep, pigs, and a few donkeys and goats were offered for sale. By way of example, it is recorded that 987 horses, 674 black cattle, 587 sheep, 178 pigs, 4 assess and 9 goats were sold here during the fair of July, 1837.

County Mayo is also a good example of the importance of market towns in Ireland, this county having a total of 24 by the year 1852, 11 of which were considered to be major market towns in their own right. Examples of these were located in Ballaghadireen, Castlebar, Claremorris, Foxford, Killala, Ballina, Newport, Swinford, Ballinrobe and Westport.

In Ballinrobe in particular, market day was a Monday, and each commodity had its location with regard to its sale. This applied well into the middle of the last century, and there

were special livestock fairs that were held at different times of the year for pigs, cattle and sheep.

Originally, livestock trading had taken place on a hill nearby to the town (Thesis Symposium, University College, Dublin, 2013), although town and street planning eventually took note of the need to control markets, and town planning took into account the need for wide streets to accommodate fairs with activities as diverse as selling animals from cattle to hens, along with music, drinking, dancing, horse racing and other activities.



The photograph above emphasises the width of streets in market towns to accommodate livestock selling, and this, along with the one below by Dorthea Young, taken in 1954, gives us some idea of the flavour of market day when the stock was brought in for sale.

Also, hiring fairs were common enough in rural Ireland during the Nineteenth Century, these also being an outlet for selling off stock including goats (Blair, 2007). They were held twice a year in May and November.

In County Londonderry, both Moneymore and Draperstown had good horse fairs, according to Blair, and she quotes an example of a fair held in Moneymore on the 21st July, 1836, and during which 343 horses, 675 cows, 283 sheep, 117 pigs, 47 litter of suckling pigs and 17 goats were sold. Nearby, and also in Londonderry, Swatragh had four fairs.



No tolls, it would seem, were charged on the horses, cows, pigs sheep and goats that were sold there.

Enniskillen was the most important market town in Fermanagh, and although it started off with three fairs only per year, by the Nineteenth Century these had increased to thirteen, one being held on the tenth of every month, the thirteenth on the 26th May. Fairs here did not cease until 1950, and The Fair Green was where animals were brought to be sold. Stock cited were black cattle, including milch cows, heifers and bullocks, pigs of various breeds, sheep, horses, a small breed of ass which was not used for drought but to convey turf, butter in casks, young calves and pigs to market, and, of course, goats.

Tempo was also in County Fermanagh, this being developed as a market town in the Nineteenth Century. Markets were held regularly on the 28th of each month, eventually assuming the proportions of fairs. Here, on the old village green and nearby commons farmers would regularly deal in, and argue over the price of, cattle, asses and goats.

Lastly, by way of example, Rathfriland, in County Down, was considered to be the best inland market town in Ulster. The first Wednesday of each month was the fair day, it being then that the sheep, cattle, donkeys, goats and dogs were brought into town on foot.

In connection with markets and fairs, it might be worth pointing out that in certain parts of Ireland there were certain things that it was thought should never be sold, a goat kid being a case in point. They could, even so, be given away, and one wonders whether, and for this reason, kids may not have been taken to market.

Having connected the sale of goats with markets and fairs across Ireland, this suggesting that these would have logically been where stock for Irish travelling herds was acquired, the next issue to give thought to is by what means and by what routes the drovers took their newly acquired animals to ports for embarkation to Britain; and following on from this, which Irish ports were exploited for this purpose.

Although an attempt has been made to learn something of Ireland's old and traditional droving highways, it would seem that there is a dearth of recorded information in this respect. By considering the more recent history of the export of cattle from Ireland, even so, it is possible to gain some insight into the ways and means employed in bringing goats from Ireland to Britain.

The export of cattle was prohibited throughout the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, although there is every reason to believe that due to the very short sea crossing between the north-east of the island of Ireland and the south of Scotland, canny cattle drovers were able to infiltrate their stock into Scotland nevertheless.

This embargo was lifted in 1765, and within forty years, say the early part of the Nineteenth Century, cattle were being landed at Portpatrick in Galloway by the thousands and then driven eastwards to the fairs that were held at this time at Dumfries and Carlisle. Indeed, cattle landed in south-east Scotland were driven as far afield as the famous Barnet Fair in Hertfordshire, and the St. Faiths' Fair in Norwich, this being in the County of Norfolk.

With regard to Barnet Fair, this was noted for being a 'horse and pleasure fair' that ran for three days starting on the 4th of September each year, and the Times Newspaper of 1834 reported it being England's largest cattle market with up to 40,000 animals on show that year.

That goats were sold at Barnet Fair, and in large numbers, is well attested, it being pointed out (Tegetmeier, 1861) that the fairs held in October attracted several herds of goats, amounting to the hundreds, and that these could be purchased cheaply.

With the coming of the steamship after 1830 the emphasis on the landing of cattle at Portpatrick shifted to Glasgow, Mersey and Holyhead (Evans, 1957), and remained so.

In attempting to link the disembarkation of cattle exports to Britain with the Irish droving herds, it should be noted firstly that according to information supplied by the Forestry Commission, and as seen on their interpretation board at their goat park in Galloway, the feral goat herds of south-west Scotland owe much of their origin to escapees from Irish droving herds landed at Portpatrick during the Nineteenth Century. Also, and with the coming of steamships, a major route into England for Irish goatmen was Holyhead. This, along with the knowledge that Barnet Fair was a focal point for goat as well as horse and cattle selling, the former arriving annually in their hundreds and herded (the Old English goat not being kept or sold in this way), would strongly suggest that the export of cattle and goats followed the same traditional routes.

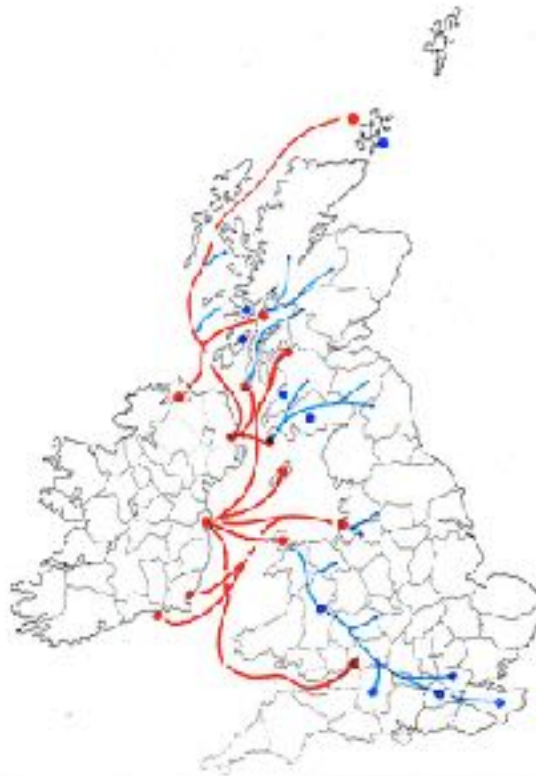
In shifting our attention to Ireland itself with regard to goat exports, Evans has again pointed out something that is vitally interesting, this being that 'the date of the great fair at Ballinasloe, County Galway, in early October, corresponds with that of the largest trysts at Crieff and Falkirk, and would have allowed time for the movement of livestock to eastern Ireland and to the English fairs by All-Hallows and Martinmass'. All-Hallows occurs on the 1st November and Martinmass on the 11th of the same month, and so the time-scale from purchasing cattle in the west of Ireland, driving them across Ireland- west to east- for embarkation to British fairs (both England and Scotland) would have been a little over a month.

That goats, too, were purchased in the west of Ireland, along with donkeys, and driven across Ireland for export, is attested by Evans, it being worth quoting exactly what he had to write on this issue: 'until quite recently (writing in 1957) donkeys and goats purchased at fairs in the west still travelled to ports on the hoof'. This, also, would suggest that these donkeys and goats used the same well-worn droving routes across the country, and one can imagine the scene when they reached the point of embarkation by considering the comment of Evans that 'apart from the small strings of beasts on their way to local fairs, the cattle droves are today most in evidence in the crowded dockside streets of the ports where they are herded on the cross-channel boats'.

Thus, the traditional means of purchasing cattle at fairs as far west in Ireland as Galway; walking what had become herds across the country by way of traditional droving routes; exporting these herds by way of ports in the east of Ireland; initially landing them at Portpatrick in Galloway, then, and with the coming of the steamship after 1830, at Glasgow, Mersey and Holyhead; following which they were driven to market at well-known fairs in both England and Scotland, would seem to parallel exactly the annual incursion of what the English called 'Irish droving herds' of goats.

This map (after Werner, 2013), shows in red the principle steamship lines that may have carried Irish travelling herds. Significantly, herds were landed at Holyhead, where herds were driven through Wales and into Scotland and England (including the Border hills); Oban, this being the gateway to the Highlands, and Stranraer, thence onwards into the Grampians, the Southern Uplands and the Border hills (all shown in blue). Significantly, all of the Scottish islands as far north as the Orkneys were within the annual range of these incursions. In reality

Irish travelling herds reached every market town in Scotland and England, their arrival being equated with the beginning of spring.



Before we move on to consider just who these Irish goatherds were, we need to consider a possible complication, this being the outcome of a recent discussion between the present writer and Dr. Thelma Rowe of the Old English Goat Society. It revolved, initially, around our agreement that we would be hard put to distinguish an Old English from an Old Irish goat, Thelma adding that this would not be surprising if the story that Irish Tinkers brought billies over to England and offered their services as they travelled around the country were true, it being not far across the Irish Sea (Rowe, 2015a).

This information was completely new to the present writer, although knowledge of this was something that Thelma Rowell (2015b) had been aware of for some time, its exact source being lost to her. It was possible, even so, that it originated in the writings of G. Mitchell, a local Yorkshire Dales folklorist and historian. She had, nevertheless, absorbed the story that tinkers who came over from Ireland, ‘mending pots as tinkers do as well as doing other jobs as they became available for a fee’, brought with them a billy goat that would be made available, ‘doubtless for a fee also’, to cover nannies that belonged to customers that they met on their way. This would have been very useful as, then as now, nobody wanted to keep a billy. Thelma additionally wondered whether the billy in the possession of these Irish tinkers was a pet that went home with them, or else was sold off here, this being open to speculation, although she was of the view that it was doubtful that they brought more than the odd goat, and would not therefore be drovers in the sense of the ‘Irish droving herds’ under discussion.

Another story that Thelma (Rowe, 2015c) had decidedly got from Mitchell, was that there were billies living wild on the Dales, and a nanny in heat would be turned out to make her own arrangements, and then come back of her own volition when pregnant.

Within this local Dales knowledge, for Mitchell had dedicated himself to recording the collective memories of the Dales folk to build up an archive of the history of the area, we

have an additional layer of information with regard to how Old Irish goats may have been introduced into England, and thus had a significant influence on localised populations of Old English goats beyond the ken of Victorian goat improvement, a burgeoning railway system with its easy transport, and the introduction of more exotic breeds from the Mediterranean, Middle East and India.

What was meant by 'Irish tinkers' during the period under discussion refers in reality to a distinct ethnic group of long-standing- often called Irish Travellers- with a well-defined language and culture. Their own term for themselves, this relating to their language, is 'Pavee', and in deference to their distinctness as an identifiable group of historic origin, this term will be used here.

What isn't generally known is that Pavees have long been established in England as a resident community, and Griffin (2008) has pointed out that that 'in Victorian times these people of Irish origin formed at least the hard core of the vagrant tinkers', it being the case that for some years after the mid-Nineteenth-Century shelta, this being the language of the Pavee, is said to have been so common that it was virtually impossible to take a walk through the slums of London without hearing it being spoken. That Pavees kept goats hardly needs to be mentioned (Helleiner, 2000), their subsistence needs being met by such self-provisioning as hunting rabbits with dogs, fishing, and raising goats for their milk.

What we have here, therefore, is the suggestion of a multi-layering with regard to Old Irish goats being introduced into Britain during the Victorian period onwards. Aside of the Irish drovers, we have Pavees who were resident in England and of long-standing, and Pavee families and groups who came over but not necessarily to settle. Thus, and when we focus upon the Yorkshire Dales as a microcosm of what may have been happening country-wide, droving herds may have passed through the region annually, and by way of traditional and well-used routes; Pavees may have come over from Ireland, bringing with them goats that they may or may not have sold, whilst they advertised their billy as being useful for covering local females for a fee; and resident Pavee families may also have indulged in a similar practice, although inevitably, and over the years, their stock may have drifted away from being Old Irish to Old English or a mixture of the two. We should not forget, also, that females in the travelling herds would have dropped male as well as female kids, and if sold on, their progeny would eventually and inevitably have entered the general gene pool that was the little hairy and long-horned goats that subsisted on the gorse scattered over the common land and that doubled up as their sole means of shelter on wet and windy days.

No wonder then that Thelma was further to comment (Rowe, 2015c) that she would guess that the local English experience of, and exposure to, Irish goats would vary enormously, with each different sort of Irishmen having their own routes which might not overlap. She added that what does seem obvious is surely that any attempt to separate English and Irish breeds of goats from that time would be absurd, this being the subject of a separate study in waiting. Apropos of this, and returning for a moment to the Dales, there is no established tradition of feral goat herds frequenting the Yorkshire Dales, and the fact that Mitchel was cognisant through his dealings with the older Dales folk that billies lived wild there is of special interest in that it may point to the fact that local goatkeepers offloaded their unwanted Old English males, whilst Pavees might just have done similarly. If we add the possibility of the odd escapee from the larger droving herds establishing themselves on the higher ground, we have a recipe that echoes the comments of Thelma Rowe with regard to a general mixing up of the Old Irish and Old English breeds in rural

communities where a goat persisted as merely a goat, and not a big-bagged potential prize winner with a pedigree to prove it.

We now come to what may be considered the greatest surprise of all in terms of researching Irish travelling herds. Evans (1957), was a useful source of material with regard to the export of cattle from Ireland to Britain, but he also revealed the origin of Pegler's herdsmen, Hook's drovers and Mackenzie's goatherds. Surprisingly, most of them were 'Pavees' who were born in the mountain country of Slieve Gullion, in County Armagh. Thus, Pavees apparently dominated the scene with regard to the importation of milkers in kid during the early spring, the importation of nannies generally at other seasons of the year, the sale of the odd goat, and an offer of the services of a stud male in out of the way places where the cottagers and labourers kept goats for household milk but were loath to go to the trouble of maintaining a stud male.

Evans used a new term for them, this being 'drover dealers', for not only did they deal in goats, but in what he termed the 'unwanted residue of the countryside', this conveying the fact that they bought and then sold on- dealt in in other words- rags, scrap and donkeys as well as goats.

Their influence was apparently far reaching, for some made big money as peddlers of cloth in both America and Australia, whilst those who followed their traditional routes from Belfast and Dublin to the English fairs quite often set themselves up as rag-and-scrap merchants in the larger towns that encompassed their annual migrations. In fact, and as Evans has pointed out, one such drover dealer became the Lord Mayor of a Scottish city.

One may wonder whether the image of, say, the embarkation of 600 goats at the docks in Belfast to be taken for sale throughout the Hebrides on mail steamers, along with the landing of equal numbers of Old Irish goats at Holyhead to then be walked the length and breadth of Wales and England to end up in Kent, fits comfortably with the image of Pavees dealing in rags, scrap and donkeys as well as goats. Certainly, writers such as Pegler, Hook and Mackenzie made no mention of a broader picture of wheeler dealing, the established image being of one of dealing in large numbers of goats. However, Evans pointed out that these Pavees were known as 'goatmen', and that their goal in bringing over goats was to reach the English fairs, and specifically Barnet Fair. Add to this the fact that these Pavee drovers were colourful characters whose experience stood them in good stead for the wider world- i.e. perfecting their blarney by having had long dealings with the English in the North of Ireland- along with the stories that became almost legendary with regard to the tricks that they used to dispose of their stock to the 'innocent English', and we have echoes of Pegler's 'blarney', Mackenzie's 'picturesque' advertisement of their wares, and Hook's suggestion that the potential buyer had to be wary when purchasing their stock. In fact the best, and possibly most mind-numbing, story yet with regard to the wiles of Irish drovers relates to these Pavees, this being that they were actually able to sell billy-goats to the gullible English as good milkers, the follow-up story that they also offloaded their stock as 'an infallible means of keeping a garden free of weeds' piling into insignificance by comparison.

As an aside, it is thought worth pointing out that in the County of Armagh generally, this being where the drover dealers under discussion hailed from, the normal practice of keeping goats was to confine them to the tops of ditches by means of an ingenious tethering device. In mountainous areas, however, and this applying to the Slieve Gullion where the drover dealer Pavees were based, goats were not only numerous but at perfect liberty to browse (Coote, 1804).

That these Irish drovers travelled long distances, and on foot, is now clearer than ever. Based in County Armagh, they embarked their stock at the ports of Belfast and Dublin, but acquired these animals as far west as Galway, it being known also that Pavees would travel down to Cork to purchase donkeys in particular.

The knowledge that the goats they sold in England and Scotland may have been acquired in the far west of Ireland is not as surprising as it might seem, as an outcome of the Dna study carried out at Trinity College, Dublin, this being at the behest of the Old Irish Goat Society, found that samples from the feral herd that existed formerly on the Island of Scalpay, this lying just off Skye, Inner Hebrides, aligned most nearly to samples from the feral goat herd of Nephin Mountain, Mulranny, County Mayo.

If we link this with the fact that Pavees purchased goats in adjoining Galway; that travelling herds were taken throughout the Hebrides on mail steamers to be offloaded and sold wherever these boats docked; that the samples for the Dna study related to mitochondrial Dna and thus logically traced back to female Old Irish goats that were sold off to crofters, their descendants being amongst the goats that escaped or were abandoned to form or join feral herds such as the one on Scalpay; then we have a chain of logic that would explain the near relationship between the Old Irish goat of the south of County Mayo and the Old Scotch goat of Scalpay.

Also, it may have been noted by the reader that the timing of the fairs in the west of Ireland in relation to the timing of their counterparts in England and Scotland is a good indicator of the time scale in terms of itinerant travel for the Irish travelling herds. With the fair in Ballinasloe, County Galway, falling in the early days of October, and those at Crieff and Falkirk occurring in the early days of November, there was something like a month to shift a goat herd from the west of Ireland to the far side of Scotland.

The distance between Ballinasloe and Dublin is 94 miles, the sea crossing between Dublin and Glasgow a further 190 miles, and the onward journey from the docks in Glasgow to Falkirk another 24 miles. Thus, and although the prospect of walking a goat herd from the west of Ireland to the east of Scotland might appear at face value to have been daunting, the total mileage when hoofs were hitting the ground on either side of the Irish Sea was only 118 miles. Allowing for a day to embark, sail and disembark, the Irish drovers needed only to have walked their herd at a pace of four miles a day or so on both sides of the Irish Sea to have reached Falkirk in time for the fair. This would have allowed plenty of time for dealing and goat selling on the way.

When giving thought to the itinerant goat droving route from Ireland to Barnet Fair, the total land distance that needed to be covered from the west of Ireland to Hertfordshire would have been around 321 miles. Now that we know that Pavee goatmen actually took goat stock to this English fair, it is worth noting that under a charter granted in 1588 by Queen Elizabeth 1st, the Manor of Barnet was allowed to hold a fair twice a year, this being in June and October. Then, in 1758, Lord John Tomlinson changed these dates to April and September. This was said to have been to improve business, although prior to the 1750's the autumn fair starting on the 18th October coincided with the slaughtering and salting of cattle at Martinmass (Owen, 1783). As and when the turnip was introduced as a crop that could be used to over-winter cattle rather than having them killed, the date of the fair was brought forward to early September, thus synchronizing the introduction of the use of turnips as a winter cattle feed with the change of the date on which the autumn Fair was held at Barnet to around the 1750's.

What we have gleaned, therefore, is that for much of the Nineteenth Century a fair was held at Barnet twice yearly, this being in the months of April and September. After 1881, however, the fair was held only in the latter month. If we were to speculate that the 900 goats exported to Britain from Ireland in the month of July, 1881, were destined for Barnet Fair, then the timing would have been around seven weeks from embarkation in Ireland in mid-July to their arrival at the fair in early September. These goats may, of course, have been purchased in the east of Ireland, although even if they had been driven from, say, Galway, their rate of progress would only have needed to have been six-and-three-quarters miles a day to have covered the 321 land miles between Ballinasloe and Barnet.

Considering that the goatmen offloaded their stock as they travelled towards the fairs, there would have come a time when some of their number would have become surplus to keeping their travelling herd under control. Take, for example, the travelling herd mentioned by Whitehead (1972) as being composed of 300 goats controlled by three men, three boys and five dogs. They were moving through Cardiff towards Kent in 1891, and shortly we shall be considering an Irish travelling herd that was photographed at rest in Dorking market, Surrey, at around the same time, and which appeared to number in the low thirties. This herd would have started out in the hundreds, and as animals were sold off, some of the Pavee drovers would have been at liberty to have indulged in dealing. Also, having practically invented the term 'opportunistic', these Pavee goatmen without goats on their return journey would most likely have indulged in tinkering and dealing as a means of making their annual round trip to Britain all the more worthwhile.

Frustratingly, there must be in existence quite a number of old photographs of Irish travelling herds residing in the archives of market towns all around England and Scotland, although accessing them is a major issue. To date, the present writer has been able to locate only three that most likely deal with this subject, although hope springs eternal, as always.

The first, and likely the most important, of these three old photographs shows Dorking market, Surrey, in the late 1890's (Janaway, 1984), it being evident that the goat herd is the focal point of the picture. Dorking market had a flourishing livestock market (note the bovine presence in the background), as well as carrying on an important trade in grain, and it is not hard to understand why an Irish travelling herd would include Dorking in its itinerary.

Much can be learnt from a study of the individual goats depicted, although this is dealt with in some detail in the section relating to phenotype and breed points. What is of particular interest in the present context is a focus on the likely goatmen depicted. By making a close study of the positioning and body language of the people forming a semi-circle around the goats, it is possible to pick out two mature men, two young men and one boy as being probably the Pavee herdsman. Although the photograph isn't of the best quality for detailed analysis, something of the character of these goatmen can be discerned even so, with one having the open and smiling countenance of someone used to dealing and trading, in other words exercising the 'blarney' that Hook (1896) warned against.



These goats are at rest, and look to be quite content. Prior to reaching Dorking, they would have been walked to the port at Dublin, endured a 73 mile sea crossing to Holyhead, and then walked a further 214 miles to this market town to the south of London.

The second photograph, again late Victorian, also shows a resting goat herd, this time in the market town of Melrose, in the Southern Uplands of Scotland.



It would seem to show one end of a larger herd of goats, and whether or not these animals are the sole focus of the cameraman isn't altogether clear. Artistically, the picture itself is very nicely balanced, the rather ornate street lamp forming the central focal point with the market cross slightly to one side. The children form a virtually unbroken line across the whole of the picture, and the space bottom left leads nicely upwards to highlight the cross. Additionally, the buildings form a perspective in terms of taking the eye away in both directions.

In pictures such as this, the 'audience' is usually looking either directly at the camera or at the subject in hand, whilst in this old photograph, neither is strongly implied. In fact there is even a sense that a point of interest is to the left and out of the way of the camera for a number of the children, whilst there is a strong suggestion that the focal point of the camera lens would lead the eye directly to the street lamp, and by no means to the goats.

The question, even so, is whether or not this photograph depicts an Irish travelling herd. Most certainly Scottish drovers did traverse the Southern Uplands on their way to sell stock further north, and goats were brought into market towns for sale generally. Breed points are of little help, as the phenotype of the Old Scotch and Old Irish breeds closely paralleled each other. But, and as with the Dorking photograph, there is a general feel of a travelling herd in transit:



The third picture, although seen, has yet to be obtained. It shows a herd spread out along a country lane in Wiltshire, and will prove to be another good source of information.

What we have discerned, overall, is that Pavees from the north-east of Ireland, and namely Armagh, were largely responsible for the exporting of large droves of Old Irish goats to Britain on an annual basis, their arrival coinciding with any season except winter, so far as we know.

They acquired their stock from all parts of Ireland, including the far west, and walked them to port on the east coast by means of the old-established droving routes that have now largely, and sadly, been forgotten in terms of Irish history.

Once landed on the other side of the Irish Sea, they again were walked along traditional droving routes to well-known fairs in Scotland and England, but also selling off their animals on the way.

That these goatmen were opportunists is very evident. They were technically dealer drovers, and it is of particular interest in this context that goats were lumped into a collective of items (rags, scrap, donkey and goats) that were considered to have been the 'residue' of the countryside.

The impact of these goats on the goatkeeping world of England, Scotland and Wales was reckoned to have been decisive to the point that writers such as Hook, Pegler and Paget firmly believed that the Old Irish breed had largely replaced the other, and very closely related, landrace breeds in these kingdoms. We need to exorcise a word of caution here, as in Victorian times an Irish goat was distinguished from the other breeds largely by horn type and coat length, and we now know that scimitar horns and a long coat did not, in fact, mark out the breed as being different from the others. Thus, when Hook stated that the Irish goat was by far the most common type of goat to be found pegged out on commons in England, he was as likely to have been referring to an Old English goat as an Old Irish. Likewise, Mackenzie felt that feral herds of Scotland could be separated out as to whether they were Old Scotch, Old Irish, or Old English, with a strong influence of Old Irish by horn type alone, this again being totally invalid. Having made this point, however, we should not underestimate the fact that travelling herds of Old Irish goats exerted a huge influence on native goat stock in Britain, and particularly in England where the goat wasn't altogether common during the Nineteenth Century.

How these goats were received, it may have been noticed, varied from place to place and the standing of the goatkeepers who saw and dealt with them. In England, they were oft times despised by the more well-to-do goatkeeper and happily purchased at a low cost by cottagers and labourers; in the mountain villages of the north, they were welcomed as harbingers of spring; whilst in the Orkneys they were treated as something like celebrities.

Lastly, we have seen something of a multi-layering in terms of the influence of Pavees with regard to goatkeeping in Britain. What were generally referred to as Irish Tinkers were not only well-established in Britain during the Victorian period onwards, but Pavees, for this is what they were, visited on a regular basis. Thus it was that small village communities might experience a huge herd of Old Irish goats being driven up their main street, and then when things quietened down, to have been offered a milker for sale, or the services of a billy at stud, by Pavees whose itinerant wanderings did not necessarily coincide with the well-established droving routes.

This tradition of selling Old Irish goats in Britain was long-established, probably going back to the whey spa days of the early Eighteenth Century, then continuing as Irish Travelling herds before coming up to date with the importation of goats by lorry during the inter-war years. In fact the present writer has firm memories of some members of the English Goat Breeders' Association buying goats of Old Irish type from "Irish Tinkers" during the late 1970's and 1980's, this being when they were trying to reconstitute an Old English goat.

In many ways, and as an end piece, the placing of the following two pictures side by side will summarise the whole story of the way in which the story of Irish travelling herds unfolded, year on year. The one to the left shows a goat fair at Athlone market at the beginning of the Edwardian period; that to the right is our now familiar travelling herd in Dorking market.

It takes very little imagination to place the men in the Athlone photograph as Pavees (although there is no evidence that this was so), the goats as being at the embryonic stage of the formation of a travelling herd, and then to envisage how such a herd could be transported across Wales and England to be at rest in Dorking market.



THE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE OF DNA

The Old Irish Goat Society has now carried-out a series of DNA studies that are not only designed to confirm the status of the Old Irish goat as Ireland's iconic landrace goat breed, but confirm its close relationship to the Old British landraces.

A surprise outcome of the earliest study undertaken was that the samples from the Mulranny herd, this being based on the west coast of Ireland, were very closely related to those from the island of Scalpay, just north of the Isle of Skye, in the Inner Hebrides.

This finding was perplexing, as the Mulranny samples clustered with the samples from other parts of Ireland, meaning that the Mulranny goats were genuinely Old Irish. The explanation must therefore lie with the Scalpay samples, meaning that some at least of the Scalpay goats had a female line that went back to the south of County Mayo.

Had we not known about Irish Travelling herds, there would have been a mystery that remained unresolved. But the fact that Irish drovers bought stock in the west of Ireland, then sold them off as they travelled throughout the Hebrides, explains the outcome perfectly.

Thus, historicity and genotyping collide to make a perfect resolve.



These two Scalpay males were kidded in the early 1890's, and in both cases they come from a line that was founded by an Old Irish female from a Travelling herd. The feral goats of Scalpay are now extinct. How Old Irish females came to be with this feral herd isn't clear. These males may be related in that they share the same Old Irish female ancestor, or they may have stemmed from two Old Irish female lines. Irish drovers may have sold goats on Skye, the females then being bred into the Old Scotch domestic goats of this island before their descendants ended up feral on Scalpay. Or they may have reached Scalpay from Harris, which is only 300 metres away, or gone directly to Scalpay.

THE MILKING CAPACITY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF THE GOATS IN THE IRISH TRAVELLING HERDS

Irish drovers were expert at selling their wares, which meant the ability to convince cottager and labourer alike that their goats were capacious milkers in terms of both the quality and quantity of milk their nannies had on offer, and the length of lactation that could be expected. Goat keepers belonging to the British Goat Society told a different story, however, although they were oft times comparing an Old Irish yield with their own goats, these being improved goat stock that was pampered, housed, fed concentrates, and bred along good milking lines. So, what could really have been expected of the Old Irish nanny 'on the road', and as it passed through innumerable villages and market towns before being auctioned off?

The Victorian period. In County Cork, the Old Irish goat was said to yield from two to three quarts of milk a day in two milkings (Warren, 1861). These goats free-ranged high mountains, and the milk was said to be nutritious and rich.

An Old Irish female belonging to H. S. Holmes Pegler that was entered in the Horned, Long-haired Females class at the Crystal Palace Goat Show of 1875 came second, being beaten by a Pyrenean goat that stood an amazing thirty-three inches at the shoulder. Betsy, as the Irish female was called, was said to have given rare proof of being an abundant milker, being described in the catalogue as having given three and three-quarter pints daily.

When advertised for sale in the Bazaar, Exchange and Mart, an Old Irish goat was described as being in 'full milk' on the 10th July, 1875, another as being a splendid milker on 20th August, 1879, and yet another as giving four pints daily on 31st August, 1885. Also a well-bred three-year-old Irish and English crossbred was said to be giving three-quarters of a pint daily at the end of August, 1885 (advertised for sale on the 31st August of that year).

Pegler (1886), and having dammed the breed for its appearance, nevertheless described it as being a good milker, though the yield was comparatively poor in quality. At about the same time (Pegler, no date), he stated that the breed often yielded a quantity of milk, but that the quality was comparatively poor.

With regard to the subject of Irish travelling herds, Hook (1896) had the following advice to offer:

Goats yielding a fair quality of milk may often be obtained from the herds of rough Irish goats that traverse the country during the summer months, but it is certainly advisable to know something of the subject before buying such animals, or the purchaser may find that his acquisition is in a ripe old age and that the milk has been “stacked up” for several days.

The experimental goat farm that was put in place by the Express Dairy Company in the county of Surrey in 1882, maintained 120 milking goats of mainly Old Irish type. In its early stages, and before there had been time to select from the aggregate the best milkers to rear stock from, the average returns were two to three pints per day (Agricola, 1882). Pegler (1882) elaborated on this somewhat when he mentioned in an article for the Times, published on the 30th December, 1882 (Pegler, 1882) that three pints was the average yield or full profit of each goat on the farm. Pegler was particularly interested in goat farming, devoting a whole chapter to this subject in his 1886 edition of his *The Book of the Goat*. Here he included a table showing the monthly return of goats kidding and milk yielded during the year which is reproduced here.

Putting three to four pints into perspective, few Old English goats were giving two pints daily around 1870, although with showing, pedigree and improvement generally through the 1870's, and based on a goat type that owed much to foreign imports, some specimens were producing between 6 and 8 pints (the target gallon as a wow factor) by the early 1880's (Pegler, 1882).

To better understand the table, Pegler pointed out that the time during which each goat was calculated to be in milk was nine months, with the average yield during the first four comprising the first period, and being two pints daily. The second period consisted of three months, with more changes being likely to occur, with the yield being estimated at 1.5, 1.25 and 1 pint respectively, so that the average yield was 1.75 pints. The last period consisted of two months, this beginning with three-quarters of a pint and ending with half a pint, an average of 5/8ths of a pint daily. Thus, it was taken that 196 quarts (or 44 gallons) was the yield of an ordinary goat during the nine months when it was in milk.

Moving on to the **Edwardian period**, Home Counties (1908) quoted two official particulars that had been published in Ireland, and that pertained to the March to November yields of goats in Wicklow county.

The first informant passed on the information as follows:

Exceptionally good goat	540 to 800 quarts according to pasture
Fairly good goat	180 to 266 quarts.

The other informant gave the figures as being:

Exceptionally good goat	540 quarts
Fairly good goat	270 quarts

When considering the experiences of goat keepers of the day, Home Counties elicited the view from Birkbeck Ravenscroft, who had been a goat keeper for thirty years, that the best milk came from the Anglo-Nubian breed, whilst the most milk came from a Swiss or Irish goat. The Reverend Boys-Smith, then a goat keeper for eight years, pointed out that

an ordinary English or Irish goat of no particular breeding would yield about 700 pounds (70 gallons). John Buchan, a goat keeper of many years' experience, started goat keeping by purchasing nannies from travelling Irish herds that occasionally passed through his village (Clun, Shropshire). He passed on the information that he was able to pick out good milkers, these giving half a gallon a day when in full milk.

Bird (1910) was of the opinion that the Old Irish goat wasn't a good milking breed. There were, even so, many that were deep milkers, but the milk given was of a poor quality. On the plus side, however, the teats were said to afford an excellent grasp for the hand. By comparison, the Welsh was also thought of as a poor milker, the Highland as not a heavy milker, the English as a good milking breed, and the Lowland Scotch as having first class milking qualities.

Dorothy Galloway (Galloway, 1980) made a compelling remark concerning the Irish goats that were to be found in Surrey during the period of **the Great War**; this being that she had the impression that the English goat used her food to keep herself in good condition- this being borne out by the fact that they usually managed to look quite plump- while the Old Irish went on milking. On reflection, she wondered whether or not this comment had been unfair, although Galloway asserted that the Old Irish goat was always considered to be the better milker of the two.

As **the First World War** was in its final stages, Pegler (1917) stated that these goats were quite heavy milkers, yielding sometimes from half a gallon to three-quarters of a gallon a day for a period. Their lactation, however, was of short duration, as those that kidded in the spring were usually dry by the autumn.

An article on goat keeping in war time (Country Life, 1917) gave the view that goats belonging to this breed were often good milkers for a limited period, although they did not possess a reputation for remaining in milk for any length of time. This sentiment was echoed a year later by a writer who gave his attention to 'goat-keeping on money-making lines', (Powell-Owen, 1918). Within the constraints of goat keeping as a commercial enterprise, he did not feel that the Old Irish goat came out too well, believing that the breed as a milker did not remain in profit for more than six or seven months, although there were exceptions to be found in respect of both the yield and the period of lactation.

During the embryonic stages of the **English Goat Revival of 1920**, English goat enthusiasts were quite keen to compare the yields of our native goat stock- this being basically the English and Old Irish- with that of the improved breeds of the day. In this respect, the results of the milk yields as recorded in the British Goat Society's Monthly Circular (March, 1920), were of particular interest.

The records of 49 goats were returned. These comprised 23 pedigreed crossbreds (this being a category for goats that were bred for milking strains rather than pure breed); five English goats which were unpedigreed); a solitary Anglo-Nubian goat; a similarly solitary Toggenberg, and fifteen pedigreed Anglo-Nubian-Swiss, this term denoting goats that were basically Anglo-Swiss (a crossing in of the best improved English milkers to Swiss goats), but in which the Improved English element additionally had some 'Nubian' breeding; and four Old Irish/Old Irish crossbreds.

Paget (almost gleefully, one can deduce) pointed out that the figures were interesting from the point of view that 'they somewhat upset preconceived ideas and prejudices', and namely that there was very little difference between the pedigreed and unpedigreed

goats, either individually or collectively. It was Paget's contention, therefore, that the results tended to show that breed had little to do with milk production, and that the loose generalization as to the superiority of one breed over another, at any rate in 'this country', were not supported by the evidence of the figures.

The average annual milk yield for all 49 goats was 104.5 gallons, this being very satisfactory as the large majority of these goat reared their own kids.

combining the milk yields for 1919 with that of the previous year (BGSMC, 1919), and in which no Irish goats were involved, the present writer has analysed the yields across the breeds in relation to the English and Old Irish goat for this period. The average yields in gallons are as follows:

Category of goat	Highest	Lowest	Average
2 Toggenburgs	236.8	139.2	188
12 Anglo-Nubian Swiss	169.8	41.2	124.2
4 Irish, Irish crossbreds (1919)	156.2	76	121.6
15 pedigreed crossbreds (1919)	230.7	42.1	111.4
23 unpedigreed crossbreds (1919)	167.9	27.9	101.3
5 English goats (1919)	121	72	99.3
2 crossbreds	118	59.2	88.6
8 Anglo-Nubians	109.2	50.8	88
5 Anglo-Swiss	100.3	42.1	77.1
2 English	60.3	49.2	54.8

What becomes evident is that only the Toggenburg, this being a highly acclaimed improved Swiss breed that had undergone systematic improvement in its native Switzerland for an ever increasing milk yield for at least three-quarters of a century at this time, and the Anglo-Nubian-Swiss, this being based upon the same kind of Swiss improved stock crossed with the very best of pedigree goats using the best milkers from a variety of imported breeds on native stock breeds-the period of improvement being around forty-five years-did any better than the Old Irish and its crossbreds.

What they did better than in average yield was also remarkable. Pedigreed crossbreds were, by definition, an attempt to increase yield under the watchful eye of the British Goat Society by creating heavy milking strains, whatever the breed sources; the Anglo-Nubian was by this time a recognized milch breed originating from native goat stock in part, but heavily reliant on a variety of breeds belonging to the Steppe-Desert Breed Group imported from Egypt, through the Middle East, and on into India. Anglo-Swiss was a category of breed that combined Swiss goats with good milkers that were then called English, but which had undergone improvement through pedigree. That the Irish and Irish crossbreds did better than the English is understandable in consideration of the fact that the 'crossbred' element would have raised the standard above that of 'native goat', although, and as a general comment, the high rating of the Irish goats and their crosses is a good indication that the breed was no mean milker, justifying Paget's comments. He was, of course, largely promoting the English goat and its usefulness in this respect, although the Old Irish goat, as an unsung hero, flew well on this breed's coattails.

It is probably right to assume that the lowest yield in the Irish category, this being 76 gallons, was that of a purebred Irish goat. If this be the case, then a comparison of this yield with those of the thirty-two individual yields entered in the milk record for 1919 is of particular interest:

Category of goat	Irish goat did better than	did worse than
Toggenburg	0	2
Crossbred	1	1
Anglo-Swiss	2	3
Anglo-Nubian-Swiss	2	10
Anglo-Nubian	2	6

This individual did better than seven of the twenty-nine goats, and worse than twenty-two, meaning that it did better than around a quarter of these goats. An interesting aside here, is that she did better than a Swiss goat (meaning any cross between the Swiss breeds), and did not shame herself when compared with the Appenzell, an acclaimed Swiss breed (76 gallons and 88.7 gallons). That the yield of an individual Toggenburg at 236 gallons was phenomenal shows, even so, that yield varied greatly between the breeds, this being two-and-a-half as much milk as another Toggenburg, this animals 94.5 gallons being much nearer to that of the Old Irish goat in question.

Again, and when we look at individual yields over the two years, we find that there was a wide difference in yield between individual English goats, and that this Irish individual did better than two English goats and a Swiss goat.

Individual yields for the two milk records were:

Category	yield
1 English (1919)	121
1 half-bred Anglo-Nubian (1920)	113.5
1 Anglo-Nubian (1920)	111.2
1 Toggenberg (1920)	94.7
1 Appenzell (1919)	88.7
1 Swiss (1919)	73.1
1 English (1919)	72
1 English (1920)	60.3
1 English (1920)	49.2

We know, in this respect, that there was some recognition of the milking qualities of the breed, although their alleged temperament, the 'dangerous' shape of their horns and their long coat tended to mitigate any thought of taking them in hand and developing them as a milch breed par excellence.

At the outset of **the Inter-War Years**, Davies (1920) offered the opinion that the breed was often a good milker of a not very high quality milk; adding, and as if he had no experience in the matter himself, that they were 'reputed' to not remain in milk more than about six or seven months.

It was the experience of Shields (1977), and in respect of goats being brought into the West Country by lorry from Ireland during the Second World War, that they 'gave more milk' than the Old English goat.

TEMPERAMENT

It is curious in the extreme that whereas the Old Irish goat 'at home' was consistently described as being docile and homely, the story changed out of all recognition once it set hoof on British soil. Here, it was unruly, aggressive, difficult to handle, not to be trusted around children, and a liability whose horns should be avoided at all costs. And here we are not talking of badly treated billies, but of the generality of females. So, what lies behind the contradictions with regard to temperament when considering the Irish Travelling herds?

The Victorian period. It was said of Betsy, an Old Irish female entered in the Goat Show held at the Royal Aquarium in June, 1886, that with kids at her side she violently resented all attempts to test her merits with regard to her milking powers. By way of a contrast, kids notwithstanding, a crossbred Old Irish and English female, advertised as being for sale in the Bazaar, Exchange and Mart on the 31st of August, 1885, was said to have been a 'good quiet milker'.

Pegler (1886) was quite unforgiving in relation to the temperament of the Old Irish goat as found in England at this time. He believed that the size and shape of the horns rendered both males and females formidable antagonists when pugnaciously inclined, which, they not infrequently were; this being in respect of both each other and to persons who were stagers to them. For this reason, he believed that they were not altogether safe with children.

Bird (1910) writing towards the end of **the Edwardian period**, mentioned what he called the aggressive habits of the breed. Thus, one drawback in relation to the breed was its aggressiveness and impatience of control. Not only were Old Irish goats inclined to dispute with each other, but many were at times inclined to spar with their attendant. They were also considered to have been anything but safe as children's pets. Trying to be more optimistic, even so, Bird offered the opinion that a few generations of good treatment and careful selection would probably do much to modify this trait of character. Compared to the so-called aggressive old Irish goat, the Welsh was said to have been not so pugnacious, the Highland not aggressive but of a nervous temperament, and the Lowland Scotch of a quiet nature.

This same theme persisted into the period of the Great War, Powell-Owen (1918) remarking that its dangerous horns, which could be used as formidable weapons, were 'against the breed'. For him, the ideal goat was hornless, and if children were about what he called a 'horned Irishman' could be 'very dangerous'. This, he thought, was particularly so if the goat were teased, a point that he thought worth remembering.

Despite attempts to present the Old Irish goat in England as being somewhat aggressive and untrustworthy, we have a very different story relating to the breed back home. J. B. Warren, of Warrensgrove, Crookstown, in County Cork, wrote to the Field (Warren, 1861) to extol the usefulness of the goat, pointing out in so doing that it was not only valuable and easily fed, but ‘domestic, and affectionate’. To prove his point, he described how a servant of Lord Kenmare, who lived adjacent to Warren, had close to 200 goats. A horn was sounded twice a day, and the docile animals came down off the mountain to be milked. His only negative comment with regard to the breed was that they required a constant watch to keep them out of mischief, although this of itself would reinforce the idea of docility and affection, and as opposed to being aggressive and untrustworthy.

What we need to do is to look to the way in which goats were kept by the poor cottager and labourer at this time, as the method of husbandry in terms of indifference and neglect would have had a bearing on temperament.

In this respect, we are grateful to Walter Paget, writing as the editor of the British Goat Society’s Monthly Circular (Paget, 1919b) for an illuminating description of how the common goat of his day was kept. This is worth quoting in some detail, as he captures the way in which the everyday goat was kept by the everyday goat keeper in a country district some thirty miles from London, this being remote from the railway and with extensive commons that could have been ideal for operating the kind of commonage system that more or less typified the way in which the Old Irish goat was maintained back home.

Firstly, no advantage was taken of the extensive range of commonage for providing exercise or a change of food, the method of management being to simply tether these goats day after day on the same piece of ground that was at a convenient distance to the cottage door and front gate. Even the kids were not allowed their liberty to play and exercise their limbs, but were tethered like the adults. Paget particularly noted that these kids were hardly able to carry the weight of their collar, and some were fastened by a rope which, in many cases, had got inextricably wound up in the briars and bushes so the ‘the little creatures’ were quite unable to move at all. In fact he and his companions released ‘several of these prisoners who were tied up short by the head and perfectly helpless to disentangle themselves’.

The goats seen were all of the roughest type, the one or two males seen being of the same rough, undersized, hairy type that Paget described as being ‘all beard and bones’. The kids also were of a most diminutive size, being mere handfuls of skin and bone and pitiful little specimens. When considering the size of the males, Paget compared them to a well-known stud goat of the day named Malpas Tipperary, he being what we would now consider a goat of British Alpine type. This male, he affirmed, would have made ‘three or four of the “billies” in common use.

Having described the failings of cottage management with regard to goat keeping, Paget went on to comment that ‘it speaks volumes for the hardiness and usefulness of the goat that they do, somehow or other, struggle through these conditions and attain a tough and lean maturity which their owners exploit for whatever can be extracted from them.

Paget described the common goat stock that he had seen as being small, rough and hairy, and with big beards. He didn’t call them Irish, nor did he associate them with the Old English goat. We are left, then, with the general impression that he thought of them as a nondescript, a generalized goat that had resulted from mongrelizing the native goat over a period of fifty years or so. What we have to remember, though, is that this was still the

era of assigning quite restricted breed points to goats that belonged to the Atlantic Landrace Group. If it were short-haired and with wide-spreading horns, it went into a box marked 'English goat'. Similarly, if it were long-haired and with scimitar horns, it was likely to be labelled an Irish goat. We now know differently, of course; but then, a long-haired goat with wide-spreading horns or a short-haired goat with scimitar horns would have been thought of as a mongrel or nondescript. Thus, it is more than likely that Paget was actually seeing goats with either an Old Irish or Old English heritage, even both, along with the result of the numerous crossings between Old Irish travelling herd nannies and Old English billies over the years.

Paget may have been pleading for a better form of management when it came to the everyday common goat stock in the hands of the poor, although even the enlightened British Goat Society members who were dedicated to saving a remnant of Old English goats in the Inter-War Years were not above, and yet inadvertently, encouraging an aggressive temperament in their well-fed and well-housed stock. Someone who knew the Revivalist English goat of the 1920's very well, and this because she worked for the Window Harrisons, these being one of the cornerstones of the English Goat Breeders' Association, informed the present writer (Egerton, 1981a) that she had worked with the famous English stud goat Sedgemere Caesar. Her experience of him was that 'he ripped me up from top to toe with his horns, and that was another reason for discontinuing the breed'. In a further communication, Mrs. Egerton enlarged on the temperament of male Old English goats, and having reiterated her own experience in different words- 'I had my clothes ripped up by Sedgmere Caesar and had it not been for them my stomach would have been ripped open'- she went on to explain that the ones that she worked with seemed bad tempered, especially Mischief of Weald, but 'I always think males of all kinds in this country lead most unnatural lives, with not enough freedom, which makes them bad tempered'. Just what an unnatural life and not enough freedom amounted to may be gleaned from a comment made by Monsey (1980). In describing a very long-coated and powerful male, she made the point that although he was almost weather-proof, he lived in an open-fronted shed that was made from gore and brushwood, and was tethered by a slate at the front. Thus, solitary, no freedom of movement, no variation in browse and feed, and possibly not properly protected from wind and rain.

Mischief of Weald (Werner, 2012, shown right) was considered to be bad tempered, whilst Sedgemere Caesar (BGSMJ, 1993), shown below, was the male that ripped Egerton up from tip to toe.

Interestingly, earlier commentators implied that not only were Old Irish goats aggressive, but that the particular shape of their horns added to their dangerousness. It will be noted, however, that both these 'aggressive' Old English goats had horns that were dissimilar to the popular idea of an Irish horn type, with Mischief of Weald having strongly twisted Dorcas horns, and Sedgemere Caesar a semi-curling horn shape in which the latter growth is angled strongly downwards. Whereas an Old Irish goat that had sabre horns would have of necessity had to work at ripping the clothes of a handler, the horns of either of these males would have been much more effective in this respect, it requiring only a side swipe and a jerk of the head to have carried out the deed.





In 1921, Ada Carlos Cartwright offered what she described as being a very quiet and easy milking Irish goat for sale, this comparing favourably with an Old English female that she also wanted to dispose of, and that was said to be 'very quiet and gentle'. (Cartwright, 1921). This same Ada Cartwright was the last active member of the English Goat Breeders' Association, the last of the breed in domestication, these belonging to her, being disposed of when she dies in 1953. Cartwright was well-known in goat breeding circles for her ability to deal with 'unruly males'.

So there we have it. In Ireland, the breed was docile and affectionate; when resting in market towns as a part of an Irish travelling herd making its way through England, they appeared from photographs to be quiet and content, and in no need of restraint; when written about by English goat keepers, they seem to have become aggressive and dangerous to be around. When trying to square the circle, it would seem that logically the key to the ill-favoured temperament of the Old Irish goat once it had been purchased by cottagers was its subjection to abysmal and neglectful husbandry, it seemingly being a parallel case that the Old English goat- which had a reputation for responding more quickly to any attention given them than most goats, their kids being much more affectionate (Harrison, 1931)- could be most aggressive when subjected to poor treatment.

FULL ILLUMINATION: MICHAEL J. MURPHY AND THE GOAT MEN OF SOUTH ARMAGH

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that the unfolding story of the Irish Travelling herds has worked backwards in that it began with sources that related to where the drovers travelled throughout England and Scotland, then worked back and over the Irish Sea to how and where the drovers acquired their stock, homing in on South Armagh as being the centre of the trade with regard to the goat men.

The chink of light as to a resolve came with the writings of Evans in 1957, although he, and in all honesty, was inadvertently misleading with regard to who the goat men really were.

Full illumination came in meeting up with Kevin Murphy, an historian, in South Armagh, he opening the door to a study of the writings of a friend of his, now deceased, Michael Murphy. We therefore 'come home' in that Michael Murphy was expert in collecting and collating information on the South Armagh community during the critical period between the world wars, this including vital information that not only concerned the story behind the goat men, but the importance of the goat on and around Slieve Gullion: their husbandry, uses, and why they went feral.

MICHAEL J. MURPHY: THE MAN. Michael J. Murphy's parents were natives of Dromintee Parish, in South Armagh, his father being Michael 'Buck' Murphy, and his mother Mary, nee Campbell. Michael himself was born in Eden Street, Liverpool, in June, 1913, his family returning to Dromintee in 1922, and when Michael was eight years old.

There, he attended Dromintee National School, leaving full-time education at the age of fourteen to become a farm worker on the local farms. He was a natural historian, developing an interest in storytelling, and focussing upon the imaginative language and folk beliefs of the community living around Slieve Gullion. From these beginnings, he began to write down the stories and sayings behind the traditions and everyday lives of his community. He also made a photographic record, and his recording of the history and everyday lives of the area around Slieve Gullion began to appear in both the local and provincial newspapers. Reading widely, his first book, entitled 'At Slieve Gullion's Foot', was published in December, 1941. Before this, however, and important to the story of the goat men of South Armagh, Michael Murphy took up a career in broadcasting in 1938.

Photograph showing Michael J. Murphy (on the left), with Kevin Murphy. This picture was taken by Alice Murphy in St. Patrick's Park, Dromintee, in 1974.

Courtesy of Kevin Murphy.

Michael Murphy joined the Folklore Commission, going on to form what is estimated to be the largest collection of oral traditions in the English-speaking world.

In a full life, he was also a socialist republican, spoke out against the social, political and environmental problems that faced Ireland, published ten books, and wrote six plays along with scores of short stories.



He retired from the Department of Irish Folklore in 1983; died in County Louth in 1996; and is buried in Darver cemetery.

As has been pointed out by his close friend, Kevin Murphy, Michael Murphy knew most of the drovers, his own father- who died in the 1950's- being one of them. His father would take the Hebridean route with goats, and was a fluent speaker of Scottish Gaelic.

Michael Murphy has proved to be an invaluable source with regard to the story of Irish Travelling herds. His first talk for the BBC, which took place in 1938, was, and incredibly, entitled 'The Goatmen of South Armagh'. Following this his book, entitled 'At Sleive Gullion's Foot,' was published three years later and contained a chapter on the pavhees. The story of the Pavhees was told again in 'The Rising of Yalla Ned and Other Stories', this being a collection of short stories that was published in 1992.

Aside of this, Michael Murphy included invaluable information on the Old Irish goats of the Slieve Gullion area when he recorded the everyday history of the community.

Following this resume, we will turn our attention to Michael Murphy's first broadcast for the BBC. He wrote to The British Broadcasting Corporation with the suggestion that his script entitled 'The Goatmen of South Armagh' might be of interest for a series called 'Echoes of Ulster'. The reply, this being dated April 5th , 1937, and on behalf of the Northern Ireland Programme Director, was most encouraging. It was thought to be entertaining, it being pointed out that the BBC liked the authors to read out their own script. Of such was a life in broadcasting made!

Michael Murphy was therefore summoned to appear at the studio on the following Saturday, this being April the 10th. He had to travel to Belfast, and the fee- to include both the reading and travelling expenses- was two guineas.

This original letter reeks of age and time and place, and harks back to a time when the typewriter was modern technology.

The script itself is totally fascinating, and is here reproduced in full:

THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Head Office: Broadcasting House, London, W.1

31 Linenhall Street, Belfast

TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAMS: BELFAST 25834

5th April, 1937.

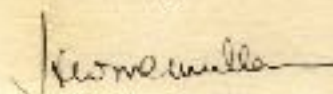
Michael J. Murphy, Esq.,
Dromantee,
Dromantee P.O.,
Newry, Co. Armagh.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your script "The Goatsmen of South Armagh". I think it is entertaining and could be used in "Echoes of Ulster" as you suggest. We prefer, however, that scripts shall be read by their authors and I am wondering whether it would be possible for you to come to Belfast on Saturday next, 10th April. Would you let me have a reply as soon as possible?

The fee would be £2 - 2 - 0. for the reading and travelling expenses.

Yours faithfully,



Feature Programmes
for B.I. Programme Director.

MMH/BB.

ANNOUNCER:

As you said at the beginning, Mr. Millar, it's hard to beat the candle. It's certainly more romantic going to bed with a candle than with an electric torch.

MR. MILLAR:

That's right. There's some of the good old stock would rather have their drawing rooms lit with a few nice candles yet.

(MUSIC UP DUT)

ANNOUNCER:

Do you know that at one time the export of goats was a most important part of Northern Ireland's cross-channel trade? Here is Mr. Michael J. Murphy to tell you about the "Goatmen of South Armagh".

MR. MURPHY:

We all know that Northern Ireland exports cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep, but would you believe that at one time we also exported goats? About fifty years ago large herds of goats were exported from Northern Ireland to England; and the trade was handled by men who lived in the valleys around Slieve Gullion in South Armagh. These men, some of whom are still with us, can claim the distinction of being the only persons in Ireland engaged in the export of goats for commercial purposes.

It is not too clear how the trade originated, but goats, apparently, must have been rather scarce in England during that period. Indeed, judging from some of the stories which the goatmen tell about their travels with the goats through England, many of the English people of that time could not have even heard of an animal called a goat. However, a business-like mind is a well known characteristic in us Northerners, and the South Armagh men soon remedied matters so that the English people knew a goat in more lights than they had bargained for!

The men from the Slieve Gullion district in South Armagh used to go to England for the summer months - in fact, they still do so - and some of them probably realized that as milk was scarce then, goats could be sold to the English people if the superb qualities of goats' milk was extolled to the residents of the small towns and mining villages.

The theory was successful, and for some years the goatmen made what would be regarded in those days as a handsome fortune. When goats became so plentiful in England as to become a nuisance the trade naturally collapsed; but one goatman still alive in Broomhall, South Armagh, remembers the first goat which he brought to a village adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal, where, to-day, herds of the animals may be seen

grazing on the banks in numbers just as large as those herds that roam the hills of South Armagh at the present time.

The goatmen bought their animals in fairs as distant as Commaught and had to walk back with their charges. It nightfall, the men sometimes acquired a big yard for the goats, but they often drove the animals up a quiet laneway and slept with them all night. While the drovers remained with them, the goats were quiet enough; but a goat left to its own instincts takes a destructive fancy to vegetables and sprouting hedges. Once a goat has nibbled a hedge it is doomed for that year and for many to follow.

Arriving in England, the goatmen took their animals to the mining towns of Lancashire and Wales, and to towns from South Shield in County Durham to the hamlets surrounding London. They sold many of the animals on the route, but the remainder were usually auctioned on a market square.

There was a star salesman with the Slieve Gullion men named Patrick Murphy, who is now a prosperous business man in Canada. The English people found his sales talk so imbued with Irish humour that they simply couldn't resist his appeals to buy, as he would say "one of the most wonderful animals on earth".

Nowadays, of course, it would hardly be possible to drive goats along the road owing to the volume of motor traffic. I'm afraid the goatmen would have a nasty experience rounding up their goats after a modern car had sped by; but even in those days they had some disturbing experiences without motor cars.

The goatmen used to drive their charges through the side-streets of the towns and sell the milk, from which they derived the income that paid their way as they went along to a certain town. The children, of course, took a wonderful delight in the capering of the young kids, and would even try to catch one. The mother goat apparently resented such interference and usually dunted the child with its horns. Goats and goatmen would then have to stampede from the place as quickly as possible.

Indeed, from some of the experiences which the goatmen have had, I believe they must have sighed with relief when they had sold the last of their herd; for a goat, as you know, is one of the contrariest animals

The setting is a Mr. Millar- the speaker preceding Michael Murphy- who is lamenting aspects of the abandoning of the candle in favour of electric light! As the announcer points out: 'its hard to beat the candle' in terms of going to bed with one rather than with an electric torch. To this Mr. Millar replies that there are still those who would rather have their drawing room lit with a few nice candles.

Michael Murphy is then introduced to the listeners, and with the announcer pointing out that goat export was once a most important part of Northern Ireland's cross channel trade.

Michael Murphy then puts the whole story of Irish Travelling herds into perspective, this being based upon intimate and personal knowledge.

Below, the main points of his narrative have been collated and summarised, although also included is additional information that appeared in Michael Murphy's book entitled 'At Slieve Gullion's Foot'. This, as mentioned previously, was published in December, 1941, and therefore less than four years after he gave his first radio talk. It is a vital source of information as it not only expands upon the story of the goatmen, but explains what was only hinted at in the script of the talk. To avoid confusion, the information taken from the book is presented in italics.

- The export of large herds of goats took place about 50 years ago, this being around 1887

In 1941, Michael Murphy stated that the goat-trade to England was flourishing 50 years ago.

- They were exported from Northern Ireland, although the goatmen would buy their animals at fairs as far away as Connaught.
- The trade was handled by men who lived in the valleys around Slieve Gullion, they being the only persons who did so
- Their motive, not unsurprisingly, was commercial, although why the trade in goats started up was not entirely clear
- What became the 'goatmen' were already travelling to England from South Armagh for the summer months anyway, but for a different purpose

Originally, the goatmen were what Michael referred to in his book as 'The Travellers of Slieve Gullion. They were known also as the "Pahvees of Slieve Gullion", this being the title of the chapter that relates to them. The term Pahvee was explained as originating as a French name, and meant to imply a distinctive class of hawker. Michael Murphy then went on to explain that he could not trace any French name from which the term may have originated, although he recorded that the term may have had a Canadian origin. Whatever its origin, he believed that the term was appropriate in that the Pahvees of Slieve Gullion were of themselves a distinctive type of hawker or pedler. So, what became the goatmen of South Armagh were originally traders, dealing in cloth mainly, but also in 'waste' of 'scrap'. When they left to 'gether rags', this being the local phrase, they would take a bag with them to gather them up; and when gone, he would have been 'at the rags'.

This, naturally, disabuses us of any idea that the the Pahvees of South Armagh were Irish Travellers, this being the original assumption when without the information provided by Michael Murphy.

Why travelling became virtually a way of life for the South Armagh community was also explained. 'Travelling instincts' was one possibility, a Celtic wandering spirit another.' Michael Murphy himself was of the view that many reasons and causes were responsible for the region being a 'Valley of Travellers', although, and importantly, he stated that the Pahvees themselves would 'stress economic reasons'. The people had never been contented with a 'wholly rustic way of life', even so, and 'all' had traded and travelled in some way or another. Economically, however, the land was not said to have been highly productive and the farms were small, which encouraged travelling to trade when the 'crop was set'. For corn and potatoes, the planting time would have been the end of winter/early spring, and this may help to pinpoint when the goatmen set out to buy stock to build up a travelling herd.

That these Pahvees were inveterate travellers there was no doubt, and the story of one such is given in some detail. He was Patrick Kearney of Dromintee, and he crossed the Atlantic thirty times; was twice in Australia and once in Tasmania. He traded with the Maori people of New Zealand and the Eskimos of Northern Canada, as well as travelling around England, Wales and Scotland.

Not all who left South Armagh to travel were pahvees as in traders or hqwkrs, even so, there being those that became gold prospectors or spent their lives as sailors.

Rags and waste seemed to have been the 'vigorous' business of the travellers of Slieve Gullion, even so; and two stories told by Michael Murphy in many ways sum up this association and the sheer numbers of those involved in it. The first is that a skeleton was once found in the North Pole, being confidently identified as a Dromintee man because a bag of rags was found alongside him. The second is that a pahvee doing business with a Canadian rancher was asked where he came from. When he replied 'Dromintee', the rancher retorted that Dromintee must be 'some city', as every man who came through selling cloth said that he was from there.

- *As opportunists, they became aware that goats were scarce in England during the period in question, there being areas where goats had not even been heard of. This meant that milk was scarce, and that there could be a niche for its sale*
- *With a business-like mind, they reasoned that this lack of milk could be remedied by the extolling of the qualities of goats' milk, and that the people inhabiting the small villages and mining towns of Britain could be induced to buy goats*
- *Their reasoning was successful, and for some years what became the goatmen of South Armagh made, for the period in question, a 'handsome fortune'*
- *Having purchased their animals, the goatmen would walk them back. As night came on, they would sometimes acquire a big yard for the goats, although they 'often' would drive them up a laneway, and there sleep alongside their herd*

It was in 1941 that Micheal Murphy passed on the information that they bought their animals in fairs as far away as Connaught, walked them leisurely home, and grazed them on the grass margins of the road, the term for this area being 'the long acre', quite appropriately. The leisurely pace of movement was to maintain the condition of the goats

- As to the temperament of the goats, they were quiet enough when the drovers were with them; although without supervision, they would be destructive of vegetables and hedges, the latter being doomed for many a year when nibbled. Michael Murphy also thought of the goat as the contrariest of animals
- Once the goatmen landed their Travelling herd, they would walk their charges to the mining towns of Lancashire and Wales, the towns between South Shields and County Durham, and the hamlets around London

The landing points in England were said to be Liverpool and Holyhead in 1941. From there they were driven to different fairs and markets throughout England and Wales. They got as far as Barnett Fair near to London.

- The intention was to reach a certain town. On the way, the policy was to both sell off the goats enroute, and to sell milk in the towns they went through. From this they derived the income to pave their way as they journeyed. At the end of their travels, they would auction the remaining goats in a market square. In respect of the sales pitch, Michael Murphy mentions a star salesman named Patrick Murphy, and who would say that goats were one of the most wonderful animals on earth

On the journey, the goatmen milked the goats and sold the produce in villages, taverns and towns, this providing the money for their subsistence until the goats were sold. Michael Murphy had already stated in his broadcast that as the goatmen drove their purchases back over Ireland, they would often drive the herd up a laneway for the night, and sleep alongside them. In like manner, he stated that when moving across England, the goatmen would drive their goats up bye-ways at night, and slept near them.

In 1941, Michael Murphy alluded to the many funny and amusing tales that were told of the goatmen's encounters with the English. Males would be 'foisted' on the 'innocent English people' as good milking goats; and a selling point might be that goats would eat all the weeds from a garden. A factor in being able launch such selling pitches successfully was said to have been that the goat was not well-known in England at this time.

- Sometimes the goatmen had disturbing experiences, this being to do with trying to keep together a large group of goats. When driving their charges through the side streets of towns, the magic combination of capering young kids and the wonderful delight of the local children would lead on to a resentment of such interference by the mother goat, and the children then being hunted by the dam's horns. Such occasions were marked by a stampede of both goats and goatmen as they vacated the area as quickly as possible. With such events in mind, Michael Murphy believed that the goatmen must have sighed with relief when the last goat was sold.
- This trade 'naturally collapsed', and due to the fact that goats became so common as to become a nuisance in England. Michael Murphy supported his view by quoting the personal experiences of one goatman who was even then alive and well in

Dromintee, his story being that there was a village adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal that had no goats. He brought the first goat to the village, the consequence of which was that 'today,' herds of these animals may be seen grazing the banks of the canal, and in numbers that were as large as the herds that then roamed the hills of South Armagh

- There is also mention of what appears to be herds of feral goats, this pinpointing their existence to the late 1930's. In relation to this, the reference is to 'the hills of Armagh', suggesting a number of populations.

Here then, we find out who dominated the trade; why it started up; something of what happened during these annual incursions, and why it stopped. With regard to the latter, goats were indeed quite scarce in England for much of the Nineteenth Century, although there was indeed a goat revival in the early 1870's that blossomed into the founding of the British Goat Society in 1879. This was, even so, very much dominated by the aristocracy and the middle classes, and it took a while for goatkeeping to infiltrate many a village and its way of life by way of the common and village green. In this context, the Old English goat was hanging on, although goatkeeping would have been enhanced, encouraged and supplemented by the arrival each year of the goatmen and their lookalike charges.

One burning question that has not been answered, even so, is the timescale involved. Pegler mentioned Irish Travelling herds that relate to the year 1880, whilst Michael Murphy stated that it was happening on a large scale in the 1880's. When this feature of Irish life began, even so, has yet to be pinpointed.

From an historical perspective, it is possible that the Old Irish goat was involved in the fad for whey spas that burgeoned from the late Seventeenth Century, whilst the Irish Pavées that were a feature of Victorian life may also have been responsible for bringing in and distributing goats, although possibly not on a large scale. But just when the first of the Pavées of South Armagh began to see possibilities for a lucrative trade in goats in Britain came about has yet to be established.

As to its decline and demise, Mackenzie (1957) put this down to the opening salvo's of the Great War, this being entirely reasonable, although Michael Murphy, who was the touchstone for all things Irish Travelling herds, informed us that it petered out when goats became so common as to become a nuisance in Britain. These two events would appear to be unrelated on the surface, although it is of interest in this respect that the First World War resulted in a resurgence of goatkeeping in Britain, this being as a result of the need for home grown produce due to the German u-boat campaign.

Something like a trade in goats from Ireland did resume after the First World War, even so, there being comments by English goat breeders in relation to lorry loads of goats being brought in and sold around the country. As to who brought them in, they were simply 'Irish' stockmen, whilst of the goats themselves, there is no absolute guarantee that they were purebred Old Irish goats, as by then goats of Modern Improved type were to be found in Ireland.

One such commentator on this 'resumed' importation of goats from Ireland was Joan Shields (1937), a well-known goat breeder and top-level judge for the British Goat Society. She has described how Irish goats were coming into the West Country 'by the truckload' during the Second World War, this presumably being because wartime demand exceeded supply. She thought of these Irish goats as being quite different to the Old English, being

short-coated, lighter in build, and with horns that were erect until the last few inches, after which they turned straight back in a hook. Interestingly, they gave more milk. The colour was described as being chestnut, and without exception they had black eel stripes and black markings on the legs. Such colour and markings refer to the Bezoar colour pattern, which is found in the Old Irish goat certainly, but is often seen in feral herds due to introgression. On balance, the description would suggest that these imports of the 1940's were not strictly speaking of the Old Irish breed.

Perhaps the most surprising comment made by Michael Murphy was that 'handsome fortunes' were to be made in the goat export trade, it being heartening that the humble little Old Irish goat- the sustainer of everyday life over a long period of Irish history- should seal its destiny by being worth the 'equivalent of its weight in gold!

An interesting, but little thought about, aspect of our story is that these goatmen would leave behind not only their homes each year, but a still sustainable local population of Old Irish goats; and this leads us on to review the research and writings of Michael Murphy in relation to how the Old Irish goat of Slieve Gullion fitted into local life and husbandry during the 1940's.

THE OLD IRISH GOAT OF SOUTH ARMAGH IN THE 1940'S

Having established that the goatmen of South Armagh were responsible for the considerable trading of Old Irish goats into practically everywhere in the British Isles, we look inwards to the goats that were not exported, but still had a role to play in the everyday life of the people living under the shadow of Slieve Gullion.



In 1941, Michael Murphy added some notes on the character and uses of the Old Irish goat in his book 'At Slieve Gullion's Foot'. In quoting two sayings, these being 'always kick a goat; for if it's not goin' into harm it's after comin' out', and 'you're as high-minded as a goat', Michael Murphy associated these sayings with the view that the instincts and impudently destructive habits of goats were well known in his day.

As to the uses and value of the Old Irish goat, it was noted that:

- Many horse-dealers bought male goat as they were supposed to have kept horses healthy and in good condition by reason of their peculiar and distinctive smell
- They ate a weed that was said to be one of the causes of murrain in cattle
- Goats milk was thought of as being more nutritious and healthy than that of cows
- Goats milk is 'stronger' than that of cows
- Goats are not subject to many cattle diseases
- People once churned on goat's milk and sold the butter to druggists for use in compounding salves and ointments
- Goats eat all sorts of herbs and sour shrubs disdained by cattle.

It is of interest that male goats were called 'bucks' at this time in the Slieve Gullion area.

In April, 1942, Michael Murphy included notes on the Old Irish goat of South Armagh when he wrote about Dromintee Parish.

In these notes, he painted a picture of how the Old Irish goat fitted into local life, and how they were kept.

At the first level of husbandry, goats were kept in and around the fields and farmsteads, but were restrained in various ways to prevent them from wandering and damaging crops. He explained this by stating that 'all goats, except when turned out on the mountain, or when on a tether, are langed'. We learn, firstly, that goats could be tethered, meaning allowed some freedom, but essentially were restrained by rope.

Goats were also allowed to move more freely, as in not being restricted to a small area, by 'langlers'. In simple terms, a langler simply meant tying the legs together to restrict movement, although it was a little more complicated than that. Michael Murphy described the process in the following way:

Langlers are made from a course bag, cut on the round in a circle; they are twisted, and one of the circles passed over the twist; the hoof inserted, and then the langle pulled tight; the same is done with the other side.

Two langles are fitted, with these draw knots (or "running knots") on each fore and hind leg.

In essence, langles are the means of tying each fore leg to each hind leg, as described, and something like this is still practiced on the Aran Islands, as seen by the Old Irish Goat Society during its visit as a part of the National Survey (shown right). On the Aran Islands also, a goat might be restricted in its movement by a single version of the langle, as shown below.

Another form of langle were the cross-langles, and in which they are tied to form an X, this being from right foreleg to left hind leg, and from right hind leg to left foreleg.

A third method of restraint, as in restricting movement, was a spancel or spanshell. This was defined as a short langle tied to each fore leg, under the breast and not the body. This method of restraint wasn't observed on Aran.

At this point, it seemed as if a langle was, by general definition, a tying of the legs together in various ways, although Michael Murphy went on to describe 'another form of langle' that was nothing like this. Here a langle is:

a block of wood hanging on a chain from the goat's neck, and reaching to its knees

Yet another form of langle, which was said to have been likely imported from the north of Ireland, specifically County Down, is:

To fit a wooden triangle on the goat's neck, with spears wider than the animal's body; this is used where hedge or fencing is common, the contraption catches in the apertures between the bushes, preventing the goat from passing through.

Such a contraption is quite hard to imagine, although Kevin Murphy kindly provided a photograph of a goat wearing one that was taken in County Monaghan, near to Inniskeen, and can only be thought of as crude but effective, but no fun for the animal it adorned.

Having reviewed goatkeeping by those who had land, we turn to the class of goatkeeper who was landless. These were the 'cotters' who rented a house from a farmer, but had no grazing. In this instance, their goats were let out to 'roam the mountains', and although technically the grazing was owned, no money was asked of them. The pattern of goatkeeping was that:

These goats are milked at night, some night and morning; the goats usually gather of their own instinct at a rendezvous at night, and even in the dark, answer the voice of their owner calling : "kiddy?.....kiddy?"

That these goats came down from their mountain grazing voluntarily to be milked isn't unique to Slieve Gullion, it being recorded that the goats of Wicklow did something similar, and to the sound of a horn, in the 1860's.

Apart from land owners keeping goats on their own land, and landless owners using the mountain grazing, Michael Murphy informed us of the fact that those goatkeepers who had grazing would put their goats on the mountain to be served, and then leave them there until kidding (called 'yenning').

Thus, the free-ranging overwintering of goats on the mountain appears to have been a method of husbandry on Slieve Gullion. This makes sense, as during the spring and summer, this being when the goats were in milk, owned animals would be kept close by the home. During the autumn and winter, however, and when the goats were not in milk, they were left to fend for themselves, and thus required no housing and feed. This points to the hardiness of the breed, and this method of husbandry is echoed in the way in which the transhumance life style of the farming communities along the Border Hills of England and Scotland often resulted in the leaving of goat stock on the hill to over-winter. Thus, Old English and Old Irish goats could have an overlapping cycle of husbandry.

‘Putting their goats on the mountain to be served’ points to the existence of feral goats on Slieve Gullion, and this is confirmed by the comment of Michael Murphy that ‘wild goats, that is without owners,’ originated from kids which were never caught’. This explanation for the origin of feral goats, both in Ireland and in the British Isles, has never been offered before, and is thus quite unique.

Apropos of this, the Old Irish Goat Society visited an island recently where all the adult feral goats had been rounded up and removed not long ago, but the kids were left behind. These have now matured into an adult feral goat population. Once again, and in terms of goat husbandry, it is of interest that the feral goat population was being used around Slieve Gullion to provide stud goats for the domestic goat population, and thus allay the need for keeping male goats in domestication.

In respect of feral goats, Michael Murphy went on to point out that they went in ‘droves’, each led by a buck. He had seen fights in which a new buck tried to take charge of the drove. Sadly, the assumption that a mature male led the group, with the corollary that its reign might be ended abruptly by the appearance of a new and more vigorous male, was common currency even in naturalist circles at this time. Possibly, the reason for this was an assumption that feral goat and Red deer social behaviour were similar, although the reality is that a feral goat group comprises family groups that are led by matriarchal females, the males having a parallel yearly cycle of behaviour in which they join the females for the rut, linger on into the early winter, then drift off in bachelor groups that see them living independently of the female groups for much of the spring and summer.

Henry Tegner, a contemporary of Michael Murphy and a well-known naturalist living in Northumberland, was very keen on the feral goat populations of the Cheviot Hills. In his writings, he made a similar mistake in that he always assigned leadership to a ‘billy’. In his case, he even went as far as to suggest that individual ‘herds’ were led by a white billy!

Interestingly, Michael Murphy gave his audience a breakdown of the number of feral groups frequenting the Carrickbroad Mountain and the names associated with them. Indeed, the very fact that the local population had taken the trouble to name them, and by their headquarters, meant that there was a distinct awareness of them and their behaviour.

There were the Quarry goats, which rested at night in the stone quarry; The Tower goats, which rested ‘around where the Old Round Tower was on the rock above the quarry’; the Hawk’s Rock goats, this being the second rock south of the tower; the Old Road goats, these staying around the old road which was ‘sort of backway to where Johnston’s house stood’.

The picture painted is of four distinct groups that were not too far from each other; that they were hefted on home ranges that were easily identified; and that they had particular resting-up places that conform with the need of feral goats for a dry bed at night (rockscape, in this instance).

This photograph shows Michael J. Murphy in 1983, with Slieve Gullion itself as the backcloth



THE OLD IRISH GOAT IN THE 1960' AND '70'S

When Michael Murphy was writing in the 1930's and into the Second World War, he gave a clear indication that the Old Irish goat was still woven into the fabric of everyday life in South Armagh. Goats were still being kept on farms; those without land of their own were finding ways of keeping goats to help sustain their way of life; the mountain was being exploited for goat grazing; and feral goats were accepted and even being included in the husbandry of domestic stock.

In this respect, South Armagh was a backwater in terms of Old Irish goat history, for- and thank goodness for small mercies- the changes in Irish goat history that had been affecting Ireland as a whole for some time were yet to have an effect on the rural community based around Slieve Gullion.

There were even so, dark clouds on the horizon.

Towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, there were a little over 300,000 goats in Ireland, there being a goat for every dozen or so sheep and every fifteen cows. But the close of the Victorian era had brought about changes that had ultimately led to the demise of the Old Irish breed in Ireland.

Goat improvement had started in England with the Victorian Goat Revival of the 1870's, and this had resulted in the founding of the British Goat Society in 1879. Its policy, as it related to goat improvement (type and milk yield), was to side-line the landrace breeds altogether, and to concentrate on building up milking strains based upon foreign imports. For some time, the Old Irish goat was safely on the periphery of this trend; but by 1900, British Goat Society members were domiciled in Ireland, and bringing into the country goats of foreign improved type. Not only this, but such members developed the idea that the Old Irish goat should be 'improved' in much the same way as had happened in England. This idea took shape during the Edwardian period, and in 1911 a conference was held in Dublin that saw the Board of Agriculture agree to the importation of 'improved' stud goats from England, and for the purpose of grading up the Old Irish goat to their type. Thus, it was decided that the original landrace goat breed of Ireland should be 'phased out' in favour of an improved type.

Progress was slow, even so, and in the period following the First World War, the slow disappearance of the Old Irish goat probably had as much, if not more, in common with a decline in goat keeping in general as in side-lining it in favour of British Improved breeds.

It is heartening, with such a story in mind, that the Old Irish goat of South Armagh seems to have remained largely unaffected by this trend when Michael Murphy was recording the story of the Old Irish goat on and around Slieve Gullion.

The beginning of the end, so to speak, in relation to the extinction of the Old Irish goat in domestication in South Armagh, came about in the 1960's, and with a burgeoning goat revival in Northern Ireland. This led on to the founding of the Northern Ireland Goat Club in 1965 which, inevitably, was based upon foreign goat stock. By then, the Old Irish goat was rare enough for there to be some confusion as to its genuine type in improved goat breeding circles, and it was the case that although a class for them might be included in a goat show, the animals entered might well have been little like the genuine article.

Fortunately, and although such events would eventually become the writing on the wall for the Slieve Gullion Old Irish goat, it would seem that in the 1960's and '70's there was still a goodly goat population in the area, and that it was most definitely Old Irish and the legacy of the goats written about by Michael Murphy.

Kevin Murphy, historian and friend of Michael J. Murphy, remembers these goats well. The feral goats of Slieve Gullion were reckoned to be good foster mothers, and females would be caught, domesticated, and used to suckle orphaned lambs. On the other hand, they were not always popular, as the feral goats were considered to compete with the sheep for grazing. Those that were domestic in origin would be langled, this being two fetters on the back to keep them still, and because they would otherwise be frisky and go through hedges. Overall, they might be considered a nuisance around the 'domestic scene', and for this reason let loose on the mountain. They were needed, even so, and for their milk, the community being poor. It was also believed that the milk of goats was helpful for children with asthma, whilst dairy farmers also kept goats to 'keep away diseases'.

In terms of catching goats, it would seem that a local man named Devlin became something of a minor legend in that being tall and lean, and a good runner, he chased and caught them as and when needed.

Kevin Murphy stated that the goats were horned and, vitally, that there was not difference in terms of appearance between the domestic and feral populations.

When meeting up with the Old Irish Goat Society, Kevin Murphy was shown the Society's flyer. Upon seeing a picture of Grey Pied, she being a female in the Walled Garden breeding programme, he exclaimed that she was the exact type of the goats back then, adding that 'I would have picked this goat out anywhere as one of the goats we knew'.

In Grey Pied, then, we are able to glimpse back in time and to see just what the Old Irish goat of Slieve Gullion was like only forty years ago, and before goats of modern improved dairy type were brought in to replace firstly the landrace domestic goat stock, and then infiltrate the mountain and its feral groups to change also their type.





But all is not lost, even so, there still being goats of the original primitive type to be seen on Slieve Gullion, a sample being shown below:

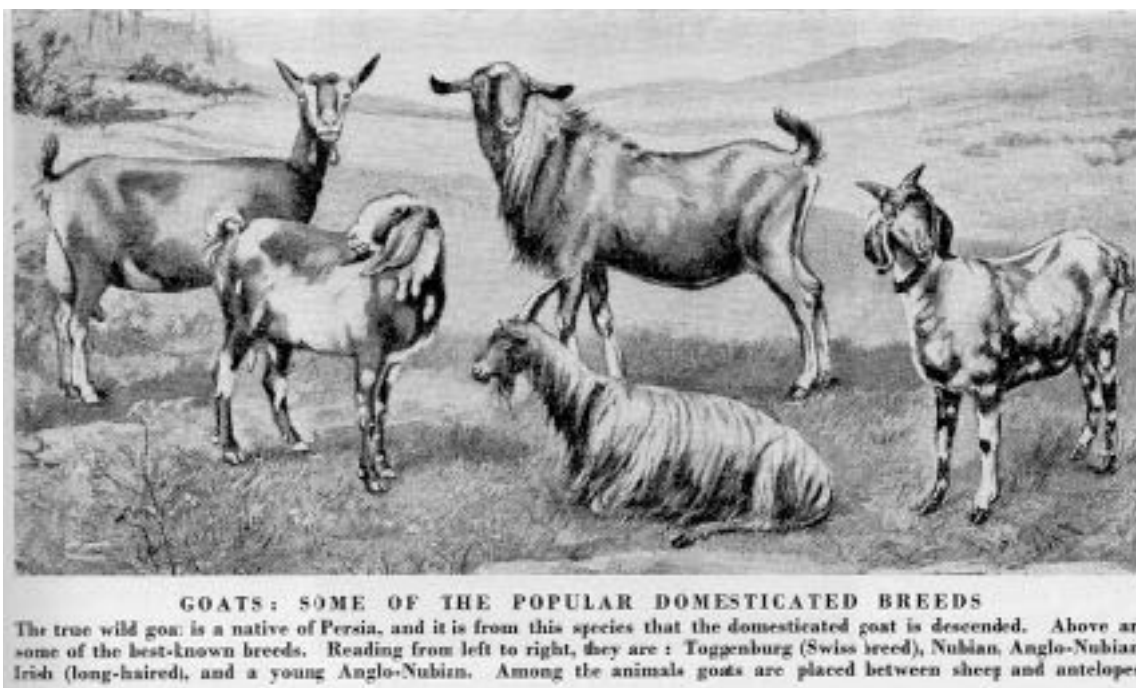


Equally, the presence of the Goatmen of Slieve Gullion lingers on in the collective memories of the community, most of whom have descendants there. Kevin Murphy himself knew many of the pahvees as old men, and recently one resident of Dromintee told him that ‘sure all belonging to me were goatmen’.

In some ways, a century can seem to be a long time in terms of history, but in terms of the Old Irish goats that are still to be seen on Slieve Gullion, and the unfading memories of the people of Dromintee, the Goatmen of South Armagh are still very much alive, deserving more than a chapter in the history of the Old Irish goat.

ENDPIECE

The illustration below dates to the Edwardian Period, showing ‘the most popular breeds’ in England during the early part of the Twentieth Century. The long-haired Old Irish goat would likely have been drawn from life at a goat show, and her presence at a goat show would equally have been likely due to her owner having purchased her from one of the Irish Travelling herds of the late Victorian period. If this be so, then we are quite literally looking at the end of the road in terms of travelling for an animal that accompanied goatmen from the west of Ireland to the South- East of England. No wonder she is lying down!



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