

RATHCOFFEE HISTORY GROUP



THATCHED COTTAGE, PAINTSTOWN, CO KILDARE

This little gem can be found just after Paintstown crossroads, on the right-hand side of the road to Rathcoffey, in County Kildare. The cottage, a former shop, is a fine example of the vernacular style.

It always reminded me of my late grand uncle's thatched house in Clonkeen Carbury. warm in winter and cold in summer. The cottage belonged to Mary O'Keeffe and she bequeathed it to Sarah Neill and her brother, Ned. It was a delightful shop full of character. On one side was huge open fire burning turf, with the big kettle hanging from the crook. Then there was the dark brown counter and behind it the shelves. It was quite convenient, as there were no other shops in the area. The top floor was used as a store for the shop.

It was fully stocked with tea, sugar, butter, bread, milk, flour, sides of bacon which were cut by a machine into rashers. They also had cooked ham, sausages, black and white pudding. On Thursday evenings, the customers would wait for the *Leinster Leader* to be delivered. Now in those days the sugar came in huge bags and the tea in tea chests. In fact, these chests were used by people moving house. They were excellent for china and Delph as these items could be wrapped in newspapers and packed away. The tea, sugar and flour had to be measured out, into smaller bags. Now for the children H.B ice cream came in blocks. I remember a stainless-steel cutter was used to guide the various ice cream sizes. It usually was cut into 2-penny, 4-penny, and 6-penny chunks, with a wafer at each end. Toffee, sweets and minerals also were stocked. Over the-half-door-there was a metal-strip, which was a requirement, giving permission to sell tobacco, and cigarettes.

When the late Ned and Sarah died, it was sold to the present owners for a holiday home. They began to refurbish it and put their own touch to it, starting with the wonderful workmanship of the thatcher Emmet Dolan from Tullamore. He used a water reed thatch, which was the first on this roof. Traditionally, straw was used. Now in certain areas, straw is being replaced by reed.

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

What a picturesque scene, now that all the windows are painted and the addition of beautiful window boxes add beauty with their trailing plants. The owners are continuing to work on their dream home.

Acknowledgements.

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