

‘OUT OFFICES’ & ‘FARM STEADINGS’

Providing housing for a population is a very difficult challenge known all too well in current times. Expert opinion, knowledge and expertise is sought and utilized. Similarly, much consideration is afforded in choosing the best type of farm buildings for use by today’s farmer for whatever type of farming system they operate.

Previous generations faced similar tribulations. The level of detail, given over to recording the different types of farm buildings in use, for the Irish censuses of both 1901 and 1911 is truly fascinating. Each different type of farm building was afforded a separate recording column and any building not on the pre printed list, which the enumerator was obliged to record, was even given its own distinct column also.

Furthermore, anyone who has ever examined these supplementary Irish census forms known as ‘B1’s’ and ‘B2’s’, will know, that the level of detail recorded, even extended to the type of, or (rather unfortunately termed), ‘class’, of associated, inhabited dwelling house. A scoring system, based on the types of wall and roof material used, the number of rooms therein and even the number of front windows, was all used to determine how each house fared.

Here is list of the different types of ‘Out -Offices’ and ‘Farm Steadings’ (presumably in order of importance) as they were known by, and as pre-printed on the census forms for recording purposes: Stable; Coach House; Harness Room; Cow House; Calf House; Dairy; Piggery; Fowl House; Boiling House; Barn; Turf House; Potato House; Workshop; Shed; Store; Forge; Laundry; Other.

In many circumstances, the local societal ‘gentry’ at that time, were easily distinguishable on these forms, simply by noticing how many recordings were made for each type of building that they owned. See example attached from the completed form of the Kirwan household, Dalgin in 1901. Peculiarly, outbuildings associated with ‘The Big House’ for use as pleasure, e.g. - a Summer House/Tea House or for horticulture use, e.g. - a Greenhouse/Conservatory, were not to be recorded.

In the majority of farmsteads recorded however, it is evident. that hardship, humility and hard work were intertwined in the daily lives of people by their (albeit, cherished and valuable to them) simple, stone and thatched structures. Their livestock and fowl were housed in buildings, many of which, have now disappeared forever.

As current farming practices continually encourage investment and ever-increasing modernization, the disappearance of these buildings, (some, having been upgraded/converted to reflect current use), their distinct layouts, and all of the varied farm work associated with each of them, is, and has, in many cases already, rapidly become obsolete.

The three photographs attached, show gable end walls of road facing, former farm buildings in Russelstown.

This PDF link provides an interesting read, on the history and use of traditional farmyard layouts in Ireland:

https://www.google.ie/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/uploads/media/Farm_Buildings.pdf&ved=0ahUKEwiBqa-hl8zQAhULBcAKHcCXBOEQFghvMA4&usg=AFQjCNGW3WaYfmK_g9HYbmmsv5oelyZFBw&sig2=G0mSTOLZsMLFyLP8Efk3RQ.