

# A Farmer's Eye on the Weather

"As the day lengthens, the cold strengthens". Candlemas Day, 2nd February, is about mid-winter. The farmer should then have half his winter fodder left. However, there is a saying, "If there's enough ice afore Christmas to carry a duck, there'll be nowt after but slutch and muck".

First warning of rain --

"An arc of cloud from north to south, it'll rain as sure as man's a mouth".

One Chipping farmer called the arc of cloud, "Noah's Ark".

Some hours later with rain threatening --

The cloud coming in from the west lowers on to the fells.

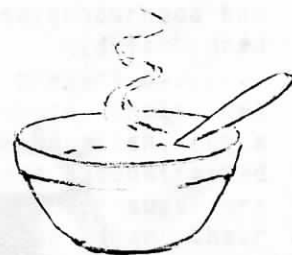
A farming family in Newton described this as "The Chipping Duster".

Clitheroe people are said to put it rather more unkindly -

"Nowt good comes out o't Chippin hollow!"

## In Praise Of

## PODDISH AND OATCAKES



Longer since, a few poddish for breakfast would be the usual way to get every day off to a flying start. Some local families even had them for supper also. Yes, poddish was normally described in the plural --even throddy poddish, the very dense almost solid variety. It would be always oatmeal poddish, none of this new-fangled rolled oats concoction.

They would be made with water and a pinch of salt boiled in a pan on the fire and kept well stirred. They would be served just with milk, definitely no sugar or syrup. Ideally you would eat them out of a basin, and when you had finished them, your breakfast tea was poured into the basin. Such tea, with a slight flavouring of oats, was deliciously mild, and again, had no sugar.

There was little variety of cereal in the Chipping district. Oats were the only grain crop which had a good chance of growing and ripening in our wet cloudy summers. Few local farmers could afford to take risks by experimenting with the growing of wheat or even barley. Though cheap wheat started to come into Britain when the American Prairies were cultivated, the traditional use of oats persisted -- for oatcakes of course, as well as poddish.

Even local gentry were proud of poddish.

Canon Richard Parkinson (1797-1858) liked to come back when possible to his relations in Chipping and Bleasdale, and sought out "some of our old sort of porridge".

William James Garnett (1818-1873), of Bleasdale Tower and Quernmore Park, also had a respect for porridge. Garnett was the founder and manager of Bleasdale Reformatory. The Inspectors of Reformatories were regularly complaining about the monotony and cheapness of the boys' diet at the Bleasdale institution. In 1870 Garnett wrote to the Chief Inspector in London pointing out that the oatmeal porridge served to the boys was far better than many things that cost more money. He also added that in the north we don't approve of south country slops! (1)

An earlier commentator on our northern diet was the traveller and diarist Celia Fiennes in 1698. Riding northwards through Lancashire she arrived at Garstang where she first met with "clap bread made all of oats". "A great basket full of wafers as big as pancakes, and dry so that they easily break into shivers" was set on the table. "The taste of oat bread is pleasant enough", she wrote, "if it is well made, but for the most part it's scarce baked and full of dry flour on the outside." (2)

One of Chipping's 'professional' oatcake bakers is named on the 1851 census:- Mrs Peggy Illingworth, widow, age 60, living in Windy Street. She was remembered for having oatcakes hung on racks and rails around the house.

(1) Lancs.R.O. DDQ 75

(2) The Journeys of Celia Fiennes. Cresset Press. 1947.