

## The Harvest

A combine harvester passed by this morning and I began to compare harvest today with the harvest of my youth. Out would come the binder, in went the three horses, and away to the field. What fun when the last few rounds of corn were standing; most of the rabbits were there, all the children, dogs and men were at the ready. At last! The rabbits ran out, dogs yapped, children screamed and everyone ran in all directions. Lots of rabbits lived for another day, but I can well remember catching 40 - 50 in one field. Now we rarely see even one. Rabbit pie is almost a thing of the past.

The corn would be put in stooks and the older generation would not think of carrying a sheaf until three Sundays had passed. All the helpers would come in to supper and how the old table groaned with home cured ham, a tongue, pickles and my Mother had either apple pie and cream or junket with cream. These were usually flavoured either with rum or brandy - the real stuff!

How I can picture our dairy; long stone slabs with pans of Devonshire clotted cream, a dozen in a row or more and home made butter. There would be plenty of cider drawn from the barrel made the year before from apples grown in our orchard. This loosened all tongues and what a sing song after.

Now, just the combine, no rabbits, no suppers with 14 - 15 around the table and no sing song after.

Some farms had a harvest supper when the last sheaf was carried. Then, all the children stayed down late and enjoyed the fun. All the baking had to be done in the brick oven in the side of the open hearth fire. How hot one got getting the oven ready with faggot wood (the small sprig wood). It was an art to do this and to know when it was hot top and bottom - no electric fires when one can set at a certain level.

Oh - the lovely crusty loaves of bread, cakes and pastries. I can almost smell them now.

Life has changed ... can I say for the better??

Old Codger