

The Errislannan Jeep

In September 1959, my father bought our ex British Forces **1942 Ford GPW** from Metamet of London. The vehicle was newly registered with the Hertfordshire registration of VLF952, and he drove it over to the farm in the West of Ireland, where it was used as the farm tractor.

I, with my two elder brothers and three elder sisters, was given the job of painting the jeep blue and red. My God we made a mess of it, but what fun it was!



(I think the demilitarization painting of the jeep was considered a wise undertaking in a land where the "Black & Tan" British Army had wielded such brutal force on the local Irish only forty years previously).

The jeep was duly used to pull the following implements on the farm

- Fertiliser Spreader
- Hay Cutter
- Hay Turner
- Hay Trailer
- Rotary Topper

These were all lethal bits of machinery in their own right. The topper in particular was a terrifying blur of three belt-driven rotary cutting heads (the side guards had been removed as they had kept clogging with grass) and





it was powered by a furiously loud 250 BSA engine. On starting it up, the fat firing noise of the engine with its governor would gradually be replaced by the whirring of all the belts as the blades built up speed until the whole contraption became Armageddon on wheels and was duly towed out to do battle with the bracken growing on the rougher grazing land above the meadows.

Only my father and, rarely, my mother were allowed to drive the jeep. In later years, as we grew up, we three boys, or my eldest sister's boyfriend Terry, were thrilled to get the chance to replace the early farm hands, Red Martin and Black Martin in some of their various roles assisting with each implement, precariously perched amongst whirring cogs and spinning blades, and being



towed around a bumpy field with only an extremely basic shouted communication link to the jeep driver. Well, with a brisk Connemara "Brandy & Soda" sea breeze coming at you, and my stiff-necked father concentrating upon keeping his pipe alight as he drove around the field amidst the familiar loud hum of the Go-Devil jeep engine, there was often little to do but hang on for dear life and pray.



The worst was with the fertiliser spreader, where you had to take a knife with you and cut open new bags of fertiliser and tip them into the hopper, spreading the stuff out along the hopper without getting your fingers taken in by the turning machinery

at the bottom of the hopper. I am reminded of a mechanic that I met once in South Africa who had been an apprentice with the JPS Formula 1 Racing Team and, when someone had had the bright idea of fine-tuning the race car under load as it was driven around a test track by Emmerson Fittipaldi, was given the job of sitting in a cradle suspended over the roaring engine. Needless to say, he also dropped the screw driver on the first corner and decided to hang on instead...

We made hay for several years, until it became possible to buy superior baled hay from up-country that was brought down in huge lorries that knocked down the gateposts of the farm and brought down the telephone line.



There was nothing more exciting in the world than to ride back from the hayfield to the barn on top of the loaded hay trailer. We children used to end the day with little ticks stuck to every part of our bodies, and there would be a maternal inspection and

removal routine at bath-time.



The jeep was taxed for UK road use continuously for the first few years until December 1963. However, the jeep was really only used on the farm and so road tax was considered an unnecessary expense. The jeep was taxed once more again for a year beginning June 1964, and then never again until 2006! In those few years the annual car tax rose from £12 and 8 shillings to £15, but now it's free, (so there you have something else to feel good about the world today...)



