

Tiny

I'm sitting, leaning against the back of this great gentle Guernsey cow. She is as domesticated as any cow should and could be, one of a herd of around forty other Guernsey's and Jerseys. Normally timid to humans, moving away when approached, cattle have a hierarchy all to themselves. All the cattle have names, given to them by my father, this one being called 'Tiny', for compared to the other cows, even to the smaller Jersey's, she is the smallest.

She lies contentedly chewing her cud, her eyes attracting flies, which she attempts to shoo away by 'flapping' her ears. She gazes into space. I wonder what she is thinking of. Do cows think? I guess they must do. But what about? The next meal, the next milking which will be soon? She has a full udder and will give generously at milking time.

She was bought as a heifer, from a cattle market in Welshpool. Most of the cows were bought there, except for a couple bought privately and one or two reared from calves on my father's farm.

Tiny, like the other cows, technically has more than one stomach. She eats luscious grass from the field, tearing it up and swallowing it into a stomach without chewing. Following the swallowing phase, the grass moves into a second stomach and later is regurgitated for chewing, after which it flows into a third stomach for digesting.

This is a peaceful and relaxing way of spending time with a cow. Tiny seems to enjoy my company, and I hers. In the distance I hear my father calling the cows in for milking, our dog Petra, running and rounding up the herd. They instinctively know that it's milking time and gently amble towards the open gate. Same time tomorrow Tiny?