



The Pioneering Pig

by
Norman Blake

drawings by
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Author's Note

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N.B.

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by Norman Blake

IT IS reported that Admiral Blake had the last pig in Taunton squealed at each corner of the ramparts to kid the Royalists that the town was full of pigs. We fear that the author of this book, who stems from the same family as the Admiral, would have stifled his indignation with difficulty had he been present. Pigs are to Mr. Blake what troop horses were to the old cavalry officer. For thirty years he has fed pigs, watched pigs and planned with pigs. Only recently he bought another house with fifty acres of woodland – for pigs.

This is not just another book about routine. It is an adventure story that will appeal not only to those who use pigs or plan to use them for a livelihood, but to all those who, surveying derelict land from a train, feel that something should be done about it. Mr. Blake claims that where man can make a garden, pigs can make a farm. His ideas for the use of pigs on the normal farm are equally interesting; cows are poor soil feeders and though allergic to sheep they will graze with avidity after pigs.

The Pioneering Pig is a lively and controversial book, and many who read it will be eager to experiment with the author's ideas.

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Introduction

I COMMEND with fervour Mr. Norman Blake, his pigs, and the book he has written about these robust and co-operative creatures. I have learnt much from Mr. Blake on this subject and I might even regard myself as one of his converts. Not that I have ever had any doubts about pigs. I have always thought of them as nice people and a profitable farm project. But some years ago, when I first visited Mr. Blake and saw his admirable gangs of porkine contractors at work, directed by a young man in a caravan on the edge of a stunted forest, I realized that the pig can be far, far more to man than a mere friend, companion and breakfast.

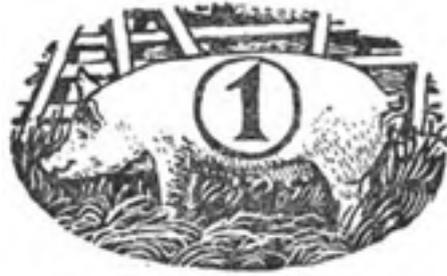
Certainly Mr. Blake sends his complements of pigs to the bacon factory; but in addition, or perhaps primarily, he uses pigs to reclaim derelict land and get it into cultivation. He says: 'I am writing this book because I love pigs. They are wise and they are active; they don't wait for something to turn up – they turn it up themselves.' It is, of course, this turning-up habit which Mr. Blake exploits in his work, *The Pioneering Pig*.

Mr. Blake writes about his pigs with considerable humility. 'I very much doubt whether I or any other man has any right to lay down the law on pig management. We none of us come from a family of eight or ten born on the same day, reared strong and hearty to a wage-earning age. So I suggest that a safer course on deciding what the pig needs is to find out what the pig wants and supply it.' This Mr. Blake does. His knowledge of pig language is phenomenal. He knows that a pig is never ill, but is only the victim of mismanagement which it is the human duty to discover and correct. He holds moreover that, when the management is right, there is practically nothing in the world that the pig cannot do for man, from purging Soviet Russia of Communism to reforming criminals: 'The Home Office experiments with prisons without bars. In all honesty I cannot imagine a prisoner making a get-away if he had two or three sows under him due to farrow in a week, or he had just broadcast some cleared land with grass seed. Growing things is so much more exciting than picking locks. . . .'

Mr. Blake is a man who is used to very hard work, when necessary, but sees no point in it. Much of his excellent instruction is devoted to avoiding human labour, or replacing human labour with forethought and intelligence. He suggests what clothes to wear, what tools to carry about, and how to manage those tools so that they are not constantly lost. All such practical hints are given with great gusto, humour and sometimes wit.

Nevertheless the book is really quite serious. Mr. Blake honestly believes and persuades us – he persuades me at least – that notwithstanding the Landrace, the pig has a nobler destiny than a Scandinavian pighouse. What that destiny should be, and how we can profit by it financially, physically and even spiritually, is the subject of this book.

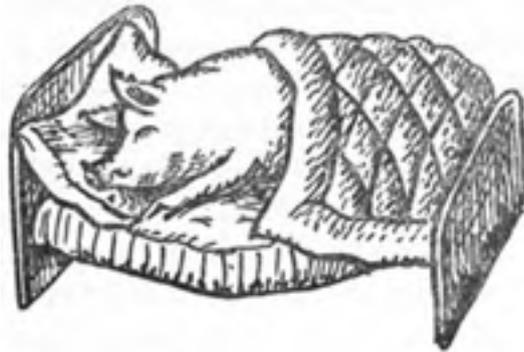
Robert Henriques
Winson, 1955



I Like Pigs

I LIKE pigs. They are wise, active and thrifty; they don't wait for something to turn up; they turn it up themselves. A lot of rubbish is talked about hardiness and constitution. One sees photos of pedigree pigs ranging in the snow, a photo to prove how hardy they are. Dash it all, every T.B. sanatorium in the country works on this principle – all fresh air, warmth in the blanket and good food digested and never in the atmosphere. Pigs are neither hardy nor delicate; everything depends on how they are kept. But if they are allowed to range to find some of their food, given adequate shelter from wind and rain, and plenty of bedding to plug the holes, promote warmth and clean their coats; if they are kept in batches of approximately thirty in a pen so that they can be snug on a cold night, then you need have no fear your pigs will stand any climate that will occur in countries where grain ripens. If you choose to keep pigs in reindeer country you must write a book yourself.

The difference between the pig and the sheep or the cow is that they grow winter coats whereas the pig has a coat that is to all purposes waterproof. I should always avoid a coarse heavy-coated pig as one that had been kept in cold, dirty surroundings. This protective peculiarity makes community warmth essential.



Sacrifice your own comfort

The pig community idea is important in another field. We often read of stray dogs worrying sheep: keep your pigs in batches and you can always sleep sound on this score. Pigs will turn and fight. Try the experiment of picking up a small pig and making it squeal; the rest of the bunch will not gallop away, but will form a phalanx and advance with angry grunts, whilst the sows in an adjoining pen make it quite clear that if the squeals continue they contemplate community action. We have a cross-bred bull terrier, a wise old bitch who considers it her privilege to maintain discipline. She likes to creep up behind a half-grown pig and nip its hind leg. She can only do it once, and if she comes into that pen again that day and is spotted the whole batch join forces and turn her out. As for foxes and badgers – well, with a sow who has eight to ten piglings it is no exaggeration to say she is eight to ten times tougher than any

other farm mother. One minute she is grunting sleepily and peacefully, a split second later she is at bay, hackles up and teeth bared. It would be safe to say that all four-legged vermin except rats are allergic to pigs. This is particularly the case with rabbits. Pigs grub out their young, fill up their holes and break up their hide-outs.

Dogs we love for themselves. Horses we honour and admire for their achievements. Black Beauty, who taught all the children to ride and gave them their first hunts, was bought off a gypsy for fifty-five bob [shillings]; Fearless, bought as dangerous and unbreakable, and worked for fifteen years without complaint. And there was Folly, her son, who bucked the General off when we were trying to make a sale. All individuals with their special characteristics. It is different with the pig. Two pigs in a sty are two pigs in a sty, two pigs so many weeks off bacon weight. But a pig unit of a hundred or one hundred and fifty pigs is a farm department not only providing meat, but cultivating and manuring the fields and sometimes demonstrating to the boss that what he rated as good grass was really rubbish. I have always felt that the right spirit in which to manage pigs is that of the company commander on active service. He sees to the comfort and well-being of his men and will sacrifice his own on their behalf. He does not over-coddle his men and they respect his discipline. Pigs are essentially animals that resent being driven. Shouting, running and vicious sticks are all signs of serious mismanagement.

This book, then, is for those who believe in studying stock with their heart as well as their brain. It is also written for those who want to climb the agricultural ladder from the very bottom. Few people appreciate the fact that while a calf has her first calf at two and a half years old, a pigling may at that age have bred a family of fifty, many of which will already have left for market. Fifty years ago it was a common practice for farmers to let their dairies to men of capacity with thrifty families. The dairymen paid roughly the value of the cow per year for her milk, the farmer providing grazing and hay, replacing casualties and providing facilities for the dairyman to keep pigs and poultry. The dairyman and his family minded the cows, made butter or cheese, the skim or whey being the basis of the pig-fattening project. The farmer, unhampered by milking and cow problems, could give his full attention to the cultivations, sheep, fattening cattle and his sporting activities. The dairyman plugged away year after year until death or a corn slump intervened when he often emerged from obscurity and bought the farm. Many of our best farmers stem from parents or grandparents who rented dairies.

Dairy renting as a potential ladder for the keen but poor is a thing of the past. Taking it by and large the only farmers other than market gardeners who came through the twenties and thirties were milk producers. No genuine farmer enjoys providing milk, cows are such autocrats, and farmers are autocrats themselves. But liquid sales and not cheese and butter are now the rule and milk has become respected, so that a thrifty farm worker can no longer hope to rent a dairy. He might, if he has a good mate, persuade the farmer to let him run a half-size pig unit in woodland and rough grazing. Only let him be quite sure with an agreement in writing that he is going to get full value for manurial and cultivation improvements.

Ladder is a misnomer applied agriculturally; there are too many rungs non-existent. There are no farms. Security of tenure ensures that only the very worst can be evicted, and we are all such decent fellows that we hesitate to dub a man the very worst. Besides, if we did his friends and neighbours and the vicar will write vociferously for him and against us, so why worry, we've got our farm, and if the youngsters want to farm, let them go oversea! No, there

are no farms, and if there were, how can a man, because he loves the soil, which means he has worked with it for years, afford the in-going valuation with milking machines, tractors and the simplest of implements? He can't do it, unless he is a farmer's son and can wangle some stock off his old man, and perhaps borrow his pick-up, bailer and combine. Otherwise he must be an industrialist's son, who may not love the soil but whose father loves him and thinks he ought to love the soil. If you are neither a farmer's son nor have unlimited money at your back, and you still want to farm, you must learn from the pig and turn something up yourself. Pioneer pig farming is the only way to use courage and energy and stock sense, which is another way of saying wise sympathy, to win a farm of your own in this country.

Few nice people have much money these days, so don't be worried by the fact, but get a large box and pack away every book or other treatise which recommends pig success by spending money on buildings, weighing machines, medicines and heat gadgets. Then find everything that you have about pigs in Denmark and put that in the box too: you may need two boxes. The Danes are delightful people. I studied there for six months back in '21, but are not we rather mugs so readily to take them at their own valuation? They stem from the Germans who glory in being directed from above. It is their book to emphasize their tremendous superiority all trimmed and docketed by copious statistics. I remember in '21, when I was working with the cows, the milk recorder, who was not a good early riser, arrived half-way through morning milkings, but all the returns were in order! All their stock are housed all the winter and the possibilities of open-air pig farming are as little known to them as is the use of sheep in arable farming.

Come, come, Mr. Blake, you can't get away from figures. The Danes can produce bacon at 25 per cent below our costs. Sometimes I wonder whether accountancy fever is not as dangerous to farmers as swine fever is to pigs. I remember years ago a popular daily was running a 'The Farmers are Ruined' Campaign. A friend of mine was run to ground by two sleuths with pencils and notebooks, so he swallowed twice and nobly declared that he had lost money for the last seven years. The trouble came the following Monday morning when all the old men were minding the time when Mr. Blank were a little boy running about without any seat to his trousers. Like an old nurseryman I have heard of, we are born with nothing, start on a capital of five pounds, lose money all our lives and die with thousands.

Perhaps graphs and all the paraphernalia of food costings are an essential in big-scale pig farming, but I am planning for you a one-man show where your eye and your ear and your nose will guide you and your instinct will be against any expenditure that is not food or seed. When the hard times come and the newspapers report farmers killing their suckling pigs at birth and fattening out their sows, you will be economizing by folding off your corn, and in the straw and in dung plaster left growing one of the two or three crops that still remain profitable.

Thirty years ago, on Stanley Wilkins's farm at Tiptree, I learnt that pigs, if given sufficient bedding, can be kept warm and comfortable without floor boards. That is a lesson I have never forgotten, and I strongly emphasize it to my readers. The reasons are economy, mobility and comfort. A wooden-floored house I have always found is pulled to pieces in a year if it is pulled about, and for this type of pig farming mobility is a prime essential. A floored house has to be made so strongly that it is bound to be expensive – well, look at the prices for yourself! A pig is an animal of curves, we all know how uncomfortable a wooden bed is, and it will be noted that the first thing a pig does when moved into an earth-floored

house is to hollow out a centre. This is partly his way of reducing draught and keeping back potential floods, but since he does it in summer and in the open he must like curves to lie in.

If I was writing an ordinary book on pig keeping I should give you a list of pig breeds and recount their excellences and I should write with my tongue in my cheek. Keep what breed you fancy, I will content myself with a few main principles. Black pigs are likely to be hardier than white pigs, black is known to be a hardier colour. Pigs that are considered unsuitable for bacon because they carry too much back fat are certainly hardier than the long lean pigs, because fat is a protective tissue. More than half our pig population is required for pork, so that it should be possible to draft the short fat pigs for this and keep the lengthy pigs for bacon. Finally, over-long sows that waddle like centipedes are apt to be clumsy mothers and poor foragers. Take your choice of breeds, then, but use active sows. Get your length from your boar. I always like to buy my boar while he is still sucking, so that I can see his mother and relations. If you are worried about length and back fat, give your pigs longer to mature by restricting their diet for the last three months.

The craze of the moment is litter testing, which, if we are to believe the reports, will improve our pigs as quickly as milk recording has improved our cows, i.e. about 100 gallons in thirty years! I have always found that by and large poor litters come from poor management. In other words, under good management results will always be profitable. To pretend that by litter testing you can improve the size of the litter-milk production in the sows, the shape of the pigs and early maturity, is asking us to believe that one might breed a horse to win the Derby, haul the coai, and teach the children to ride at the weekend.

Finally, I must urge that what I have in mind is no office-wallah's Elysium. The pig does not respond to graph control and the prick of the hypodermic needle. I have written a book for men and women who have the time and desire to paddle their own canoes. This book will start them thinking; they will make mistakes and learn therefrom. Many will take a few hints and when they fail blame me. Others will open with enthusiasm, succeed, expand rapidly, and find themselves with insufficient capital to finish their pigs. For pity's sake don't take to selling small stores, the food bills may be lighter but you carry all the cares and responsibilities of breeding and rearing and, just as the pig is over his troubles and only wants two months' food, you out him for about half what you could get two months later. When the pig market begins to fall it is always the small stores that fall worst.

The bulk of the failures will occur when people try to blend my ideas with the pigsty, parlour, Danish House; call it what you will. Immediately attention is diverted from the main plan, the land is robbed of its most valuable manure contribution, and the chance of disease increases by half. Better redesign the unwanted buildings now as grain stores or deep-litter poultry houses. One man can manage a sixteen-sow unit and have time for chores morning and evening. He can probably manage twenty-five to thirty sows if he is doing nothing else, but he will find it rather a rush and he will have less time to study his pigs. If he finds success around the corner, trebles his pigs and engages a couple of men, he is heading for an early and costly failure. A pioneer project requires one man in complete control and your employees will certainly have their ideas of how they can save time and improve efficiency, and if the pigs don't do, it will be your fault. I will make one exception, I will allow you to take on a boy from school at the end of a year.



Graph control methods

There are twenty-eight thousand square miles of marginal land in this country, much of which is suitable for pig pioneering. Is it a fact that every young man must have a council-type house, roads and everything laid on before he will consider a farm? No, of course it is not, but the trouble is that the boys who would be pioneers never have the capital to start even a pioneer pig farm. I remember once running into a depressed ex-Jap P.O.W. When he was out there he was in charge of the pig farm. He started with two half-wild sows and he finished with fifty pigs: and now he was back in England, and all the officials would allow him to keep in his new freedom was two sows, and he sighed for captivity and pigs.

Things are not as bad as that now, at any rate food is off the ration and corrugated iron and rough timber is to be had. Perhaps you would have to plan a spare-time unit of four sows on three to four acres of ground, but if you feel like pioneering – well, read on. The very idea of living one's own life and standing on one's own feet is anathema in this era of regimentation. We are all expected to fit into grooves or holes, which is probably the reason why wagon trains and stampeding herds are still such satisfying fare. Make no mistake about it, when you start pig farming you are on the high road for adventure. In fact, I once found myself with a capsized trailer and five pork pigs on the A 30 road. On one side of the road stretched Salisbury Plain, and on the other a waist-high thorn thicket ideal for pig cover, but impossible for human negotiation. My destination was a pig farm a mile ahead, for reloading; vehicles were rushing by at one a minute. Perhaps that is an exaggeration: in fact, I have always found that small pigs have a sobering and humanizing effect on all motorists. They most of them pull up and survey us with interest and envy; mothers and children become almost moist-eyed, and lorry drivers grunt: 'You can put one of those in the back if you like.' To which my stock answer is: 'You can have what you can catch'; and we chuckle at each other. In my long experience I have met only one original man. He was sitting nonchalantly in his powerful two-seater, I was on this occasion mounted. Pointing at the pigs, he inquired: 'Where is the meet this morning?'



Marginal Land and the Pig

MARGINAL land can be divided into two categories, according to whether it is trees or heathered. Without doubt you can find marginal land within fifty miles of where you are when you read this. Because you are going to start a new life with a big idea, don't imagine that the first thing is to take a long journey. The nearer you are to home the less your cost of transport and the more you'll feel at home at once with the locals. There is a danger of course, that you will find it difficult to be a pig farmer within fifty miles of the place you were a bank clerk, whilst it may be impossible to persuade your mother that your pig party is more important than her tea party. However, on the assumption that you could start quite close to home, you can have real fun finding your ground and planning your farm without spending a penny or really mean to either!

Derelict woodland is to be found all over the south of England, which I know best, particularly in the Home Counties. This is important, for the nearer you are to London the more money everything makes, which is the reason that cattle sold at Reading make more than at Yeovil, and those at Yeovil more than at Exeter. A second reason for choosing the Home Counties is that they grow city farmers, men full of enthusiasm but often managed by bailiffs and managers who trade on the boss's absence and ignorance. It should not be hard to find one of these with an area of derelict woodland, woodland from which all the saleable timber has been moved, leaving behind dead tree-tops and an abundance of brambles. Your ambition should be to rent fifty acres of such land; if it is thirty it will do, but below twenty is not enough. Your ambition is to rent this land at, we will say, 10s. per acre, with the option of purchase at an agreed figure, not more than £20 per acre or, shall we say, the value of adjacent third-class pasture. The option to extend for three to five years.

You will be wise to get clear in your mind what you want and then consult a land agent and act through him. If you know the price you are prepared to pay, and if you are prepared to rough it in the matter of your accommodation, you will be a client of great value to them, and they will serve you well. Roughly, your own accommodation is the key to the situation. A young friend of mine bought a farm five miles from a market with a two-roomed shack to live in for £10 per acre last year.

The caravan is an ideal dwelling for a young man on a pioneering job, even for a young couple with camping experience, but when the family arrives it is nothing like so good. It has several advantages in the early stages of an enterprise: it is cheap (roughly £250 will get a new one); it can be easily sold and towed away when you can afford better accommodation; everything is compact so that housekeeping is at a minimum; you can put it where you want

it, and you are clear of all the regulations relating to plans and housing standards which prevent any pioneer building a log cabin.



Clearing marginal land

There are regulations, and if you are going to have a caravan on one site longer than 60 days, altogether or spread out through the year, this site must be properly approved by the local authority. Go and see him at the Public Health Department, tell him what you are going to do and he will probably be most agreeable. What he is out to prevent is your getting a site approved and then renting caravans to other people, so that he has an eyesore colony on his hands. Satisfy him that you have a water supply and will keep the place tidy with a caravan for one (or two) while you are getting started, and you will have official approval. Do not go with the idea of meeting some damned Jack-in-Office! You will probably find an older and a wiser man than you, who appreciates an enterprise and pigs too.

Before you say: 'I couldn't sleep in a caravan', go and see some, spend a holiday week by the sea in one, and you will find that they are a great deal better than the timber and corrugated-iron shack that someone put up before there were so many regulations and now wants £500 for. Basically, the caravan cuts out the need to start by paying out £1,500 to £3,000 for house and land, and always marginal land is where there are few houses, or, as in most of the Home Counties, where they make high prices. Don't say: 'It can't be done.' With two years in a caravan it can, and on less than the price of the cheapest new car.

Caravans have another advantage, they bring a fellow bang up against his job. I was brought up on that grand adage: Never ask a man to do what you would not do yourself. Those shelters you are putting up for the pig, they are equivalent to a caravan life for him, and you in your caravan will be the more careful. Sometimes it will entail going the rounds with a torch in the rain; more often you will sleep the better for the knowledge that you will hear should anything unfortunate occur. Remember that great word TACT! If you are the tenant of A, do not pitch your caravan with adjacent and ominous sentry-box in full view of B's bathroom window. For B will undoubtedly vow, as he cuts himself shaving, to make things warm for that something pig farmer and he will be as good as his word. Snuggle yourself in under a protecting bank, show any caller the pigs and invite him in for a cup of tea. He will probably respond by inviting you to Sunday dinner. You answer that what you would really like would be a hot bath and – the British being what, thank God, they are – you will probably get a hot bath, a Sunday dinner and a valuable ally!

Roughing it may not appeal to you, but remember you are being paid for living in makeshift accommodation very highly, and tax-free. When you have reclaimed your land, you will either live on the farm you have made – in which case the increase in value will justify a loan

for the house you will build – or sell. If you sell, the increase is tax-free capital gain, which is why I so stress the Home Counties, because here grassland is always saleable at a high price and, as well as your neighbours, some London wallah may be looking for a country-house site. Ask any estate agent which he would rather sell, a fifty-acre dairy holding in Surrey or in Wales!

Derelict woodland is usually to be found in an area of pretty good fertility, and when you have finished, the land will be good saleable pasture. It may slope down to a stream and, while water is always useful, you want to make sure that the land is not normally waterlogged. Pigs must have at least half their range well above water-level. Remember, also, you have to get your food to the pigs, and bedding, in all weathers, so that it is a wise precaution to have a metalled track at any rate to your gateway. It is quite incredible how ground churns up in the winter, and your neighbour and perhaps land vendor, who is quite happy to let you travel through his ground in the summer and autumn, and promises you that it will be all right in January and February, is nevertheless likely to be considerably less enthusiastic when you have had to move out of the first lot of ruts to a second trackway and are contemplating a third route.

What you will find inside the gate of your Garden of Eden will vary, but for your own sake I hope it will contain a fair proportion of blood, sweat and tears. If it does not it will probably mean that you are doing the job with hired labour, which again means that the last ten acres will take you just as long and be just as badly done as the first five, and you will learn nothing. Your land will, of course, be full of tree stumps, but probably these will be less bad than you expect. They make tracks for hauling food rather difficult to engineer. There will also be quantities of nettles to sting you, and brambles to tear your ears, face and clothes. There may be a stream that will serve you for water and give the pigs what they love in summer – a good wallow. So under all considerations I think I should recommend the beginner to go for derelict woodland as likely to yield a higher return for the labour of cleaning, especially in the Home Counties. Remember once more to have your agreement about the land in writing as soon after you start as possible. Start when the season is right, or the bank balance is satisfactory, or because it is time to get going, but make the legality of your tenure the first charge on your spare time.

The second category I mentioned was what I called heather land. This varies from hill grazing and neglected poor land to all-out moorland. I think I should leave the Government to tackle the latter for the time being at any rate, and be a bit chary yourself until you find just what the pigs will do. There is an old saying – well, perhaps it is not very old, since I invented it myself – that where man can make a garden pigs can make a farm. If your potential site has a thriving road-house just down the road with a useful kitchen garden you may, I think, proceed with more confidence. But observe the tracks and the roadside: very often you can see trefoil struggling to make a living. If trefoil and white clover are there, even in minute quantities, the land has distinct possibilities! Again, get your land on lease with an option to purchase. A word about shelter. It is important with open lands, presuming the prevailing winds (meaning the rain-bearing winds) come from the south and west, if you can get, in your holding, a good bank under the natural shelter of which pigs can feed and shelter: it will save you much winter worry. Otherwise get busy with a spade and dig your own bank, two foot high for the smallest and perhaps three foot for the stores. Dig a little and watch a lot.



Pigs can swim

Perhaps 'use your eyes' describes what I want better. As well as incipient clover observe bracken. Bracken is no fool, he never pitches camp in land that is subject to winter floods, for one thing. That is worth remembering. It is very easy on a heathered moor to put up houses in summer and before winter you are six inches deep in water. In general, it may be said that the less there is to clear the less is it worth the clearing. Land that is covered with bracken and brushwood and brambles has probably three times the intrinsic value of the heath. Be shy of a large area of rushy land, the rushes mean that its water-level is much higher than it should be. It is an advantage to have land like this into which pigs can run in the summer, but do not depend on it unless, of course, your luck is better than mine! Were I to fence pigs on rushy land on a sunny summer day, we should undoubtedly have a two-inch thunderstorm that night, and I should have to face the pigs' bad language in the morning. Pigs can't swear! You wait until you've kept them as long as I have! There is one other type of land I might mention – poor cold clay. It's cold because it's poor, and it's poor because it's cold. My treatment of such land would be lime and crop in the spring with beans and oats, mainly beans, the oats in case the beans fail. I should let this crop ripen, and then turn the pigs in, to eat the corn and tread the straw into the ground, follow with wheat and harvest in the normal way; a pig will do well on that fed in ear too.

All this is very breathtaking and exciting and everyone wants to know what the pig has got which is denied to the sheep and the cow. The first answer is hot manure. It is well known that the practice with cattle is to turn them into a covered yard in winter, and when the straw is dirty put down more straw until perhaps there is four feet of packed manure under their feet. Pig manure, like horse manure on the other hand, heats, and it heats in ratio to the richness of his feeding. It stands to reason that a pregnant sow on a normal maintenance ration gives poorer, colder dung than a porker that is being pushed for market. 'That's wrong,' says the expert, 'everyone knows that all pig manure is cold.' But that is only everyone who has looked it up in a little book written by someone who has not taken the trouble to get his facts right. What is 'cold manure' anyway?

Well, a hot one has a great deal of nitrogen in it; poultry manure is the hottest of the lot with 1.66 per cent fresh, which is too something hot to use safely for most things. Cold manure is cold because most of the nitrogen is in the urine, which is often wasted. Besides, most of the protein which is the nitrogen in the cow's ration goes into the milk bucket. Horse manure has more, so they say that it is hot, which does not mean much more than seaside sunshine statistics.

Just to show that I can look things up too – and anything about organic manure takes a deal of finding – here is a little table:

	<i>Water</i>	<i>Nitrogen</i>	<i>Phosphorus</i>	<i>Potash</i>
	%	%	%	%
Horse dung	75	0.5	0.35	0.1
Horse urine	40	1.25	none	0.9
Cow dung	86	0.44	0.12	0.04
Cow urine	91.5	1.05	none	1.36
Poultry droppings	72	1.66	0.91	0.48
Pig dung	76	0.42	0.58	0.36
Pig urine	97.6	0.50	0.14	0.70

These figures are taken from *Manure and Fertilizers*, by the late Sir Daniel Hall, and show that pig manure is not so much cold as balanced.

The manurial production per 1,000 lb. liveweight is as follows:

	<i>Nitrogen</i>	<i>Phosphorus</i>	<i>Potash</i>
Horse	128	43	103
Cow	156	38	122
Sheep	119	44	126
Pig	150	104	128

This means that pig manure as your land is going to get it is the best balanced manure of the lot; it has all the plant foods in step and plenty of them. Observe these figures and understand why leys will respond better to pig manure than to any other.

The heat is caused by an army of lively bacteria which, when they get into the soil, consume vegetable matter and turn it into fertility. All the lands I have mentioned, with the exception of cold clay, are full of vegetable matter that has stopped decaying because of a lack of bacteria to do the job. Pig and horse manure give these bacteria in the most active form. By the action of their feet the pigs also compress or, as it is often put, 'firm' the soil which excludes the air from the soil and promotes the good actions of the bacteria. Finally, a pig has a snout. Don't put the wrong value on the snout. A pig's snout is a gardening tool: some people think it is a British Restaurant, making meals out of nothing. I feel very strongly about this. When we were young, all the summer holidays, we had the run of the fruit cages, and in winter and Easter there were apples and nuts to be used. Of course, it never occurred to anyone, least of all ourselves, that we should want any less for dinner: why, then, imagine because he digs up some bracken roots or docks the pig will require less for dinner? With the exception of sows and, if you like, pigs in the last stage of fattening, all pigs should have all the food they will clear up. When he is clearing your land, he is working for you, good and hard. Any food he does not need for fuel or weight increase goes straight back to the soil as fertility. The only waste is what you spill or the rooks steal.



The smaller the pig the harder he is to fence

We will now discuss £ s. d. After a lifetime following pigs and the land, I find it wise to be a pessimist. Bank managers are human, and in the country they know quite a bit about pigs. Don't borrow unless you must, but do not be afraid of the bank. There was a phrase of one of our 1914 vintage generals which I remember: 'Gentleman, personal reconnaissance is never wasted.' Remember that in every sphere of pig farming and go and look and think, and in this case put it as it were in reverse. Get your bank manager to come and see for himself what you are doing. This will impress him and incline you to greater care in outlay and management. The bank manager has wide discretion up to £500, and it only remains for you to be an obviously safe bet.

The minimum I can suggest that you start on is £1,500. This includes £250 for caravan or other accommodation, £250 for living expenses until the pigs begin to turn into money, and £200 for motor vehicle and trailer, preferably a Land Rover or jeep. There are three ways of starting. One is to buy freshly weaned pigs, one hundred and fifty of them, at market, keep them three months and turn them into pork. The pigs would cost you around £500, but you would only have to pay for one month's feed, the normal agricultural credit being two months, before you sold your pigs. There would be considerable disease risk in the method and it would certainly be common sense to keep back some pigs for subsequent breeding. The month's feed that would be due after two months and payable would be roughly £120.

The second method is to buy in-pig sows at market; of fifteen I suggest a couple might turn out barren, and it would be safe to discount the service dates by a month. If you bought eighteen at £25 they would cost you £50 less than your 150 suckers. Assuming you had to keep them an average of two months, this would bring the figure close on to £500. You should get 150 suckers from your sows, feeding the sows for two months would cost £67, so that the fifteen sows would have cost you £67. On the other hand, remember you are four months gone in your pig feeding, and it will take another three months before the pigs are sold. The main weakness about this method is that you are very liable to buy sows that have been drafted on account of trouble with their milk supply. I do not think this is catching, but it is certainly discouraging. Trouble at farrowing is a very likely cause of anyone giving up

pigs, and a guarantee of her past activities is of little value. Buy gilts in pig if you like, but beware of sows.



i. The sort of land to start on. The stalks that look like dead docks are dead docks



ii. Housing. These can be carried on a buckrake. They have no floor and will accommodate ten bacon pigs. In summer they will not give cool lying



iii. Housing. The old wagon may be unsightly but it gives shelter, shade and magnificent rubbing points



iv. Marginal land. The jungle

The third method is to buy fifteen or twenty gilts at weaning time, put them to boar yourself – by which time you will understand them thoroughly – and you can expect to have a happy trouble-free pig farm; but this means waiting twelve months for your profits. I am inclined to think that the best method is a reasonable amalgamation of the three. If one buys weaners, or

slips as they are well called, warranted sound, pigs that are clearly of one litter, they are unlikely to bring disease if they are put on fresh ground with good housing. If anything goes wrong with them in the first week one is covered, and I do not think a pig will carry disease longer than that if he is living a healthy life.

Buying pigs at auction can be heady wine. The beginner will be well advised to make friends with the auctioneer and tell him his plans and requirements; then he will mingle with the crowd and make his bids unobtrusively. Personally, I rather favour pinching the auctioneer's leg! About one market a month should be attended. In-pig gilts will often be obtainable, and if some of the best gilts are kept back from the slips, the foundations of a breeding herd will soon be laid. The advantages of combining buying and a breeding policy are obvious, as one is kept up against hard facts instead of building fairy castles of one's position in a year's time. Slips should treble their value in three months, and the cost of their food will roughly be the cost of the pigs, so that with wise buying and careful feeding a good margin of profit is assured. The danger all the time is that success will engender happy-go-lucky buying, feeding and attention. Fifteen hundred pounds. I hope you will not start with less. If you have not the capital, find a part-time job and make pigs a spare-time activity, but don't try to start a full-scale show on insufficient capital. It turns adventure into penance.



Clearing and Cropping

SOME years ago I was visiting a pig farm on marginal land and found that, troubled by fence breaking, they had all the sows concentrated in a pen about the size of a tennis court, rain had been heavy and the sows were belly-deep in black mud. I was shocked, but the sows did not die, and I took some time to learn the lesson. Conditions that make the pig live uncomfortably are many; pigs should always be able to feed and drink on top of the ground, but by judicious moving of the feeding and drinking troughs every inch of a pen should be trodden and dunged.

This is a very important point, and it will save you pounds and pounds in implements and labour. Troughs should always be moved twice weekly and in wet weather every other day. In wet weather choose the driest spots. Roughly speaking, your pen should be big enough for one month. Never feed near the house. This will be amply trodden and manured without your help. You may find that the pigs don't dung where the feeding troughs are: in this case move your feeding troughs where the dung is thickest; a bale or two of straw around the troughs may improve matters and make the ground sweet.

However, this chapter is on clearing and cropping, and so far we have the pigs fenced in a smallish paddock and it is covered with bushes, brambles, nettles and one or two fallen trees. You and the pigs are working in partnership, it is not just a question of getting on with a job yourself, you must set the pigs to work also. The best division of labour is for the pigs to deal with the brambles, nettles and make tracks, and you can come behind and clear up the bushes and dead wood. Pigs won't work for nothing. If you leave them to their own devices, they will find a favourite foraging ground and knock hell out of it, while you do everything else alone. It is worth while finding out what they are finding in their favourite resort, and then give them something much better to make it 'pay' them to do your work.

After they have had their breakfast, which should be about a third of their ration, take a bucket of grain, allowing about one pound per pig, and throw it right in among the brambles and nettles and rubbish that you want bulldozed. Don't shoot out the bucket, but scatter it handful by handful as if you were feeding poultry. If you are working on the spot all day yourself, it would probably be wise to give the grain in two feeds. Maize and beans are the best grain to use, as they are bigger, so that the pigs hunt more keenly, but wheat, barley or oats will do the job. Next day, before you start your work, take a staff hook (a billhook on a four-foot pole, a lovely tool used for cutting hedges and arming Monmouth's rebellion, but in

1940 we got rifles, as well, from the Home Guard) and finish the pigs' job. The pig goes through everything, he will trample down the nettles but not brambles. However, what he leaves is very easily downed and he will come after you and nibble off the bramble leaves.

Two or three days after the first assault you can probably move up your feeding troughs. It will mean extra work, your carrying buckets of meal twenty or thirty yards; or, of course, you can put your meal in half-hundredweight bags and carry a bag, i.e. four bucketfuls at a time. It sounds an unpleasant job plodding through a family of twenty or thirty hungry pigs with a bag of meal. It can be a rotten job, and you may end up in the mud if you do not use your wits and begin by throwing a bucketful of corn into the forest for hunting, after which feeding will be more or less unmolested. I should make the pigs run back to fetch their water, which is at the nearest point to the road, as water weighs too heavy to warrant its strategical use. You may think I am 'crackers' over this business of moving troughs. I assure you I have seen land-reclamation schemes spoiled again and again from neglect of such simple points as these. It is one of those things that the owner-operator remembers and the hireling always forgets. Consolidation is only secondary in importance in land reclamation to fertility. The consolidation which sheep do on arable land is axiomatic, pigs are far more effective. They move much more and they dung much more. Finally, at the beginning, the pigs are virtually the only means you have of land consolidation.

So far we have chatted for about a page and helped the pigs on their job for another five, so I think it is time we did a little ourselves. One thing we had better do in the season is to keep a look out for wasps' nests. When you have found one throw a couple of pounds of corn at it and clear away. The pigs will lay it bare and in the evening you can finish it with cyanide. In point of fact the wasps' nests are most likely to be at the roots of bushes and under or adjacent to dead trees, both of which are your work. You will naturally deal with the bushes first, and when they are cleared you will be able to get at the dead-tree limbs. All foliage branches should be made into housing faggots, which I describe later (see Chapter 5, *Housing*). You will want them within a month as the pigs grow and it is time to move forward. Stack them in 'stooks' – don't leave them on the ground. When you have finished your faggots there will still be laurel limbs and perhaps hazel and alder. Cut out anything that is not rotten and when cut will make a three-foot-six-inches or four-foot stake reasonably straight, roughly point them and leave them ready for use. Bundles of ten tied up with binder twine are handy to carry. Pile all the dead and worthless stuff into pyramids, remarking, on the one hand, that carrying wood a distance takes time, and, on the other, that the bigger the pyramid the fewer bonfires to be started, the less ground is used and the more stable it is, because, take it from me, the pigs will love these pyramids as rubbing centres. In the winter when the wood is dry and the nights are cold you can burn your pyramids unless, as is probable, the wood is marked for domestic purposes.

If you are near a road and can either buy or hire a circular saw, spare time can be well used in logging the pyramids – there is always a ready sale for dry logs. Aim to sell by the lorry load. Be timber wise and do not log straight stuff that will make rails or stakes; if you do not want them yourself these are saleable.

What is to be done with the stumps, Mr. Blake? My answer is wait and see. First of all I should give them a good dose of corn within and around to get the pigs' noses working, then I should throw in some grass seed, a prelude to broadcasting behind the pigs. Do not be afraid that the pigs will eat the seed or root up the young grass. If you are keeping them busy and

happy in front they will leave grass to grow on the stale ground they have left. The grass that will grow most readily under our cultivation is ryegrass, and the clover companion is trefoil. Both are the cheapest you can buy, so that you need not be afraid of using too much seed. Do not use any fancy broadcast machine; use a bucket and your hand, and your judgment as to quantity. Work out from a seedsman's catalogue, reducing 'umpteens' pounds to the acre to handfuls to the square perch. It would be worth getting hold of a hundredweight of lime and dumping it in a suitable spot. Take a shovel and throw it around in a patch fifteen yards square. This is roughly one-twentieth of an acre, and it will tell how the land would respond to lime at the rate of a ton an acre.

As the end of your month approaches, and you are thinking of Paddock Two, build sufficient huts at the forward end of Paddock One, to accommodate your pigs. Leave comfortable room for the pigs to feed and roam on the stale ground and fence them behind. A quarter of the area of Paddock One should be large enough. Fence forward to give the growing pigs 25 per cent larger paddock and begin the process once again. At odd moments and in between whiles consider those stumps or, better still, one or two specimens. Experiment with gunpowder and a good long fuse. Find some sort of authority, use a long fuse and work by stages. I understand that the police should be consulted – at any rate consult them. Start with a small charge and a long fuse, and don't be in a hurry. Get on friendly terms with gunpowder. I think gunpowder will give you more satisfaction than anything else I know. Winches and hoists have always been too complicated for me. It takes experience to get the best out of them. Stumping is a job you are going to do now and again, and I fear that the recommended gadget may prove obstinate and be left to rust away. One of the first things I bought to tackle brambles in summer was a liquid fire spray. It was great fun but, strange to say, it would not burn the brambles, which are full of sap, although appearing dead. While we are on the subject of fire I must relate another experience when I was sowing grass seed on newly ploughed heath. We sat in the car alongside to have lunch. I lit a pipe, gave the match a shake and threw it out of the window. Ten minutes later we heard a crackle, saw a wisp of smoke and found a patch of ground the size of a tea-cloth was burning. By the time we had moved the car it had doubled its size, and by the time we had moved the seed it had doubled again. We felt like naughty little boys and would have gone handcuffed to the police station like lambs. However, fortunately the land was surrounded on the vulnerable sides by tarmac main roads, and although our fire must have burnt a square mile, no one took any notice and no damage was done. The lesson has stuck, and I should advise against the use of fire to clear land. Also beware of tractors. They have a nasty habit of rearing, and if you are not slippy you may be for it. If you are slippy, your tractor is still upside-down, you have got to shut off the engine and get people to right her for you and listen to their good advice.

I have been told that the animals I should use in co-operation with the pigs are goats, which, by nibbling off the shoots, would kill the bush roots. I have a high opinion of goats, but goats sufficient to clear marginal land would be a formidable army. If I had a goat-liking wife or offspring I would give them the money to buy the goats and my blessing; but I think it would be a mistake to try and organize pigs and goats. If your wife 'reports your pigs out she is bound to do it nicely – it may be her goats next week. I fear Little Boy Blue would have been bluer than ever if his pigs had been in the 'taters' and his goats somewhere else in corn, twenty of them; and you wouldn't be able to see them either!

The crops that can be grown on well-'snouted' soil are various and are governed by whether the pigs will polish off the seed or the young plants if they get the chance; whether the crop is

troubled by weeds and whether the pigs will eat the crop when grown. A properly-fed pig is not really much more interested in cabbages and vegetables than you and I are; they will eat them if they require green food and they will require it, but not much. Sows, of course, are a different proposition and will eat kale or roots like a cow, which is why I prefer grass seed to anything else. If our pioneer has a wife or buddy, and I hope he has, I should recommend a popular book on gardening. A garden, fifteen to twenty yards square, could then be laid out and the various crops planted in season. The care and hoeing would not be heavy and valuable information as to what would and would not grow could be obtained. Otherwise I should confine my crops to peas or spring horse beans in March or April and cereal wheat or oats for grazing at any time of the year. The rate of seeding works out at a handful to a patch of ground five yards long by one, so the beginner must guard against over-seeding for the sake of his own pocket.

After the land is completely clear it goes under normal farm cropping. That is in view of its fertility state. A pioneer does not want to burden himself with machinery; so the best policy is to get the land down to a good ley. If the owner has an agreement with the pioneer this will be all fixed ahead for him to take over. If the aim is to sell, a five-year ley sown by contract is a good bet; its cost and quality are considered in the valuation. If it looks poor, have it mown and let the mowings lie, the cheapest way of killing out mayweed and 'fattening it for market'.

There is not much more to be said about clearing and cropping. There comes a time when the grass in Paddock One is strong enough to put the dry sow on. Dry sows will do well on grass with some help; you might add some chicory to your ryegrass if you like, although I personally do not find the pigs relish it as I expected. The time that the sows first go on to your grass is the time very seriously to consider what additional stock you are going to have to eat the grass, otherwise it will engulf you. To begin with, it must be your stock. Your neighbours will expect to get the keep for next to nothing. Dry cows are the safest bet; keep off sheep unless you are an expert. Milking cows need buildings and hay and regular milkings which might interfere with your pig work. I have found that a judicious advertisement of horse keep in a suitable paper brings a lot of interest. Horses are much easier to fence than cattle and eat closer to the ground. If you want stock to eat grass and have not money to buy cattle, try letting horse keep, but have a written agreement.



Primitive conditions

I have dealt in this chapter exclusively with derelict woodland. I should handle any land exactly the same: that is to say, pig it until bare and firm, then grass seed broadcast. Graze the

grass for a year or two and then from your observation of the grass plant, and how the clovers did, decide what crop to follow with. I should always recommend a crop that could, if necessary, be fed straight back to the pigs. Pigs will harvest oats, wheat, peas or beans for themselves, but barley gives coughing trouble. Potatoes are better than fodder beet because pigs can harvest them too. In conclusion, you may have cleared all the land available in the vicinity and wish to move to fresh fields. In this case, pig your ground rather heavily, spend three months clearing stumps and sow a good grass mixture in the spring of the year. I have purposely avoided discourse on suitable tractors and implements.

Your job is raising pigs. The capital that would be locked up in machines and tools is much better held in reserve for housing materials, food or troughs. Troughs are most important – plenty of them so as to preclude bullying: it is almost shocking how careless beginners are about troughs. If you have an acre or so of well-cleaned stump-free soil, and feel impelled to grow fodder beet – we all from time to time get these unreasoning urges – I should advise you to try and satisfy that 'thing' by potatoes, which will not need singling and are better harvested by pigs. The seed will cost you £5 to £10 per acre, £5 if you are content with stockfeed potatoes, which are quite satisfactory, but don't put yourself in the hands of the local merchant with a smile, or your seed will cost you £20. Potatoes are certainly easiest to grow. You get your neighbour to plough as well as he can with a light tractor and then go along with a stick or long-handled trowel and slip potatoes in, fifteen inches apart, every third furrow. This can be done at any time from mid-March to mid-June, but the first and the last fortnights are risky. When the potatoes begin to show, walk along the furrows and here and there press with the foot where the ground seems too open. If you have a few buckets of seed over, you might put in one wherever there seems to have been a dud. That all seems simple, and it is simple and well worth the cost of the seed when compared to fodder beet, which after ploughing will need the ground carefully firming with drags and roller – and on a small acreage the extremities are always too firm if the remainder is firm enough – drilling and then singling at a month to five weeks; and if this is not done well, and to time, the probability is that the whole crop will be spoilt. No, keep clear of fodder beet or you will be on the rocks and keep clear of a tractor of your own. It is shiny and has a lovely chug-chug, and one feels such a king sitting on top of it that it positively cries out to be used. I remember a young lady living some miles away who persuaded her mother to buy an Austin Seven. It must obviously be made to earn its keep, so she had the bright idea of hauling logs for firewood. My advice is use pigs until you can afford a contractor out of your profits and use a contractor until your profits warrant a tractor of your own. By then you will not need me to advise you.



Planning and Fencing

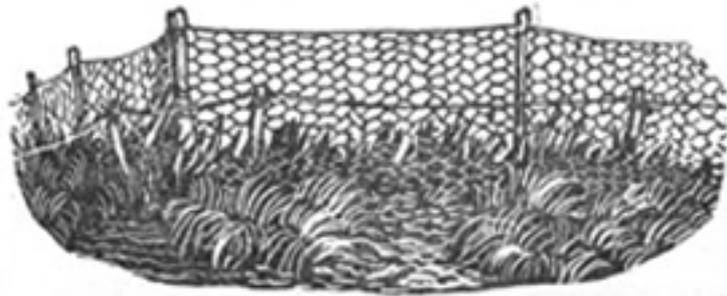
ONE hundred pigs will clear and manure one acre of land in one month. I make this statement with the confidence of experience, hoping that various people will try and prove me wrong, which will certainly result in their enthusiastic adoption of this idea of mine. You will probably be asking what size of pigs and what sort of land. I am not pretending ten sows and ninety newborn piglings will do it, but ten sows and ninety six-month stores will do considerably more. It is vitally important to get these figures well in your head so that you realize that you are not only keeping pigs – you are making land. You are going to turn land that is worthless into land that in two years will be as productive as any in the district and in four years will be the cleanest and most fertile. This idea can be developed to make farms out of the wilderness and reduced to solve the problem of the vicarage garden!

The rangy vicarage garden probably extends to a quarter of an acre; the vicar does the vegetables in his spare time and his wife the flowers. They are both busy people, farmyard manure is lacking and the weeds seep in year by year. The target should be one sow, her litters kept to pork stage. Begin with four three-months-old gilts. One hundred pigs, one acre, one month, and therefore four pigs, one-twentieth of an acre, a plot ten yards by twenty, make it a trifle smaller, and it will take one roll of wire netting. The house the vicar will make in a morning, and on the following Sunday I should be surprised if his sermon were not on building houses. His electric fences will cost him £15 and there will be straw. The standard price of straw may be taken at 2s. per bale; if it is delivered expect to pay slightly more. Always have a bale in hand for emergencies – cloudbursts for instance – and expect to use half a bale weekly. It is probable that three-months-old pigs which are less than half-grown would need more than a month to make their pen a garden, but when they had finished they would leave it in a condition to grow a green crop with plants put straight in on the undug ground. I have done this with brussels sprouts. If peas are chosen, then lime before you dig, and you will get the best peas that have ever been grown in the garden. Two further points: I advise our vicar to start with four pigs so that they make a handy unit for warmth and company, are less likely to be forgotten, little more trouble to tend and do a worthwhile job. Two young pigs, as everyone knows, is the irreducible minimum. Secondly, our vicar must expect to feel uncomfortable when he reads the passage about the Gadarene swine and may evince an unusual warmth towards the claims of the Higher Criticism.

Remember, concentrate your pigs, let them clear the land, then crop if you would enjoy your work. Concentration also gives you a tremendous saving in time. I am talking now of the

time when you are well into the collar and have in-pig sows, sows and young and stores to plan for. If you have your pigs dotted about in paddocks of an acre or more, so that they will not disturb each other and save yourself time in housing and fencing erections and re-erection, you will find yourself spending needless hours toiling from field to field fetching a tool that has been left somewhere else, or feeding or carrying bedding or water. Walking exercise over rough ground I have always rated very low as a pastime or occupation. Apart from this a bunch of pigs in a normal three- or four-acre field have too much room to be effective. Within a week the ground around the house has been well dunged, within a month it has been overdunged. It is reasonable to feed pigs – at any rate sows and strong stores – a hundred yards from their house, but two or three hundred yards is too far; in addition, some of the pigs may miss the dinner bell and go hungry.

I think it is now time to visit the ironmonger and invest in tools. First a spade: see it is a really good one – no army surplus spade shovel. Secondly, a billhook which must also be heavy and good. By the by, when I say ironmonger, I mean ironmonger and not a shop stocking house requisites plus a few tools. Use your common sense, every market town has at least one good ironmonger, and if he displays tools and agricultural requisites he is probably the man. A good billhook must be heavy as you will be cutting down tough saplings, and a heavy hook does half the work for you. A pair of handy pliers that will travel comfortably in your hip pocket is useful and, finally, a staff hook for cutting down brambles. There is one other tool you can ask for, but do not expect to get. I refer to a shepherd's crow-bar. These are roughly three feet long, pointed at one end and they are heavy. Ironmongers seldom have the right length or the right weight; a country blacksmith would probably fit you up. Your iron bar has to make all the stake holes for your fencing and tap the stakes to firm them, so it is very important. Pitching an iron bar, making holes with it, dropping it each time into the same hole instead of scoring on average one bull, three inners and one magpie; pitching an iron bar is an art – practise it on the quiet.



Do not on any account invest in a sledge hammer or 'biddle' as we call them around here. It is just another heavy tool to be carried around and mislaid, and on a critical occasion either the head will fly off or the stem will break. Biddies and sledge hammers are the mark of the greenhorn – avoid them! Finally, before you leave your ironmonger buy a pot of white enamel and a paint brush and, when you reach home, paint half of each tool white, a white band a foot long on the iron bar. Of course, I know you will never leave a tool on the ground and forget where you have put it, but a friend or employee might, and a white band hits you in the eye. Besides, if someone borrows your tools, there is no doubt as to which is yours. I nearly forgot our friend the crosscut saw. I like the sort with a second handle that can be fitted up so that two can use it if necessary. Of these tools the spade and the iron bar are, or should be, kept on the job and the others in the toolshed. It will save you many hours if you always leave spade and bar at the corner of a pen or – if you work in paddocks – at the gate, if you

like. There should be a corn-bin holding two or three hundredweight at each feeding point and a bucket. As far as bins are concerned, I find the circular ones with a pointed top are most satisfactory. If money is short an old oil drum with the top removed and a short sheet of corrugated-iron covering the top will do, but it is not entirely weatherproof. In fencing pigs, remember it is a trial of wits between you and the pig. You are going to induce him, not to force him, to stay put. A straying pig is not an erring pig; probably it is just a hungry pig. What is normally called pig-fencing wire is only pig-proof when strained tightly with a strand of barbed wire along the bottom and two-inch posts five feet apart. Pig-fencing wire is heavy and expensive. I don't like it because it is expensive. I won't have it because it is heavy. You will agree with me when you have carried a fifty-yard roll over a muddy ploughed field. To induce pigs to stay put in partially confined quarters (pigs will obviously stay in a four-acre field far more easily than in a quarter-acre paddock), the prime requisite is an electric fence that works. It's not my job to recommend, but I should start with one like your neighbour has and finds satisfactory. Electric fencing wire for pigs can be light, as light as they make it, you are going to use no wire strainers and if it breaks it is easy to join up again. You can, if you like, buy special metal standards for pig fencing, but I should not recommend them. With a wire one foot from the ground it is difficult enough to avoid short circuits using wooden standards, and I should imagine that metal standards have caused a good many people to give up electric fencing. We use short stakes cut out of hedges and get insulation with a strip of rubber: a length of cycle inner tube is admirable. In pouring rain, of course, the current shorts, but in pouring rain the pigs are inside and not fence-breaking; and, taking it by and large, I find my batteries last pretty well, which means that short-circuiting is not serious. The stakes should be eight to ten yards apart, and be sure that your corner stakes are exceptionally strong and exceptionally well put in. The wire should be eight to twelve inches from the ground, according to the size of the pigs that you are fencing, and be sure to keep your right height in hollows and hummocks. One point about taking this wire up again when you move camp. Do it carefully. All wire should be rolled up on wiring reels, and be sure they are big – about the size of a cycle wheel, as rolling wire on small reels means extra work and extra bending for the wire, which is weakening. We use old fifty-gallon oil drums. The proprietary reels that collapse and enable one to remove the roll of wire, I find, are a snare and delusion, as the wire is always very difficult to unroll again if it has many joins, and I confess my wire is full of joins.

Many fencer salesmen are quite sure that one or two wires, put up six inches apart, are pig-proof. One electric wire will undoubtedly keep sows in a five-acre field, but when one has a hundred pigs in four pens on an acre of ground it is obvious that more drastic methods are necessary. I find that two-inch-mesh wire netting, two feet high, one foot behind the electric fence, prevents fence-crashing at feeding time; particularly if the real height of the wire netting is two-feet-six or three feet, so that the bottom can come forward towards the worst fence-breaking pen and be secured on the ground by spits of earth thrown on with a spade, thus preventing the pigs from readily getting their noses under it. This, of course, means an extra electric wire, as it is necessary to have one on both sides of the wire netting, but it is in my experience the only way to keep pigs secure in small pens. And if one is going to carry pigs to pork-weight in the open the less incentive they have to wander the better. I have always found it best to have a separate fencer for each pen of pigs.

Let us imagine that you are about to embark upon your pig venture as I did with fifteen three-months-old gilts and a young boar. The first thing to do wherever you are, and on this occasion I am putting you on a bit of derelict woodland, is to make your ring fence secure.

Believe me, it will save you much worry and hot words – not that your pigs will do any harm: they won't. I had mine out two or three times on growing sugar beet just beginning to cover drill. They never touched a leaf, but my neighbours fretted themselves sick. Off you go, then, and clear a two-foot passage inside the hedge, with your staff hook for the brambles and your billhook for the bushes, and as you go cut out stakes for your wire netting and electric fencing, for, of course, you haven't been such a fool as to haul coals to Newcastle!



v. Marginal land. A bundle of laurels for house making

I expect you will agree I am right and will make the first pen for your fifteen gilts about a quarter of an acre in extent. You will begin to appreciate my wisdom when you have got about twenty yards down your hedge and are reflecting that it stretches for at least a hundred and fifty yards. I do not blame you if you break off immediately to locate a transverse path or clearing which will save your having to hack and swear your way through brambles and nettles across your front as well as down the hedge. Returning to your hedge, you will be quite surprised to find how quickly you finish your job. The front is easy: a nice two-foot wire-netting fence well buried at the bottom, with an eight-inch electric wire in front. What about the other side? With luck there is a good deep stream on that side and pigs can't swim: if they do they cut their throats – everyone told me that at school.

Oh, my friend, my friend, I weep for you and laugh too, as I remember a certain summer evening when I found a couple of sows and a boar wallowing in just such a stream and having, as it appeared from the scored banks, some difficulty in getting out. It was hot



vi. Marginal land. The demolition squad



vii. Marginal land. Woodland house

weather and I was not wearing a shirt, so I kicked off my shorts with my boots and hoped no one was looking. By dint of muddy and vociferous work on my part, and low grunts that might have been chuckles on theirs (perhaps I was tickling them under the arms), I at last got them safely on dry land. I was about to clean off the mud when I spied two weaners swimming buoyantly across stream to investigate my neighbour's pasture. To see was to act, and again praying that I was unobserved, I clambered up the bank in pursuit. The little pigs

enjoyed the joke particularly since my neighbour had cut his thistles. I gave up after five minutes, feeling that the Indian fire walkers had nothing on me and determined never again to leave a boundary stream unfenced.

Yes, you will have to be very careful with that stream. Leave them a stretch, perhaps ten yards, where you can fence it well the other side. Fence it well above and below with hurdles or some extra good and well-staked wire netting, so that the pigs can use this strip as their wallowing and drinking pool. It will make them happy and relieve you of hauling water. Having water for the pigs without hauling will amply repay all the 'Devil's Island' experience of the clearing, but your real reward will come some very hot day when everyone else's pigs are lying and panting and yours are dozing happily under trees, covered with clean mud.

Of course, if you have not got a stream you will have to haul water, and the plan is then to house at the far end of the pen and to feed and water as near road-head as possible. If you have a stream, use it if you possibly can. You can't use it unless the pigs can lie on dry beds whatever the weather; that is to say, the ground must not be all waterlogged. Neither must it be entirely tree-covered, but if water is there for the taking, three-quarters of your hauling problem is solved.

Once you have your ring fence secure and your pigs at home, turn to and get your next pen ready. To begin with, the first one will probably be cleared before you anticipate, and, secondly, fencing that has had time to settle is much more secure than when newly erected. You will also have to decide how many pens you will need. From the point of view of labour, and simplicity, the fewer the pens the better. It is not possible to run them as one big happy family. The boar will not hurt the babies, and expectant mothers are always given housing priority. However, there is always the danger of strong pigs robbing the weaker and it is very difficult to ensure that no pig is being bullied and kept from the trough. Undoubtedly the best plan is to keep the in-pig sows in one pen and the rest in monthly batches.

If things are going well now, the gilts are thriving, the clearing is progressing and has progressed better than expected (it is remarkable, for instance, what can be done in the summer holidays if one has some healthy open-air fans among one's friends), it would be a good move to venture to market and buy a batch (twenty to be safe, never more than thirty) of new weaned pigs to fatten out for pork or bacon. Monthly visits to market keep one from undue optimism or depression as to the value of one's own pigs. I usually find I have underestimated the value of mine.

Nowadays the lorry has wiped out the market town and all the marketing of a county is done at two or three centres. Do not be rushed by the term market tacked on to the local town – take a look at the provincial press, find where the stuff is going, and see a hundred batches of pigs sold, not just three or four.

You may be fearful of swine fever, you are wise if you are, but there is no more reason that you should buy swine fever from market than that you should catch 'flu at the cinema or the pub. Be careful, of course; on no account buy pigs in one pen of various sizes and possibly colours: two saddle-backs and six blues, for example. The glib vendor may tell you they were born like that: listen to him politely, but do not buy the pigs. They are almost certainly two litters put together, and two small litters probably means a high mortality on the sow. Only buy pigs that are 'warranted right': this means that you can claim from the vendor if anything

goes wrong with them in the course of a week; and, if it does, the louder the noise you make the better. Personally, I should advise you to buy pigs that are comfortably bedded down, clean in the coat but small. They probably come from a man who understands pigs but is inclined to underfeed and does not worry about creep feeding. They will do well under your management.

I think it is a good thing not to feed pigs when they get home from market. They have been very likely overfed for the previous twenty-four hours, and they will be ready to start the new regime next morning. Always feed the newly bought pigs last. If they are dull in the coat, with perhaps a certain cough, you will be wise to worm them, although I have never been able to get very satisfactory results. Read the instructions on the worm powders carefully and obey them – you are dealing with something that may be dangerous. Look out for the first few days for any pig that lies in the straw – when the others are feeding – or stands and pants. If a pig feeds shy at two meals ring up the auctioneer and report it. You will get no satisfaction after the week is up. If the first lot of stores are thriving and you still have room and money and time, you might buy a second lot a fortnight later. It is all good experience and a quick turnover, but be sure you have the right accommodation ready for your pigs. No makeshift accommodation for your pigs because they are cheap!

So far I have dealt exclusively with the comfort of the pigs. What about you? First of all, mobility. Be lazy; walk as little as possible: a cycle is an excellent servant, but it punctures and is impeded by mud. I think the best investment for a pig pioneer is a Land Rover or a jeep. They can pull a caravan or trailer, haul what you want and go places in the evening. I am not anticipating that you will want to go places much, but to feel you can go if you want to gives peace of mind.



Never send a coat to the jumble sale

As for clothing, you will need Wellingtons – two pairs in winter – but don't wear them always, only in wet weather. They very easily tear on sticks and roots. I think the best footgear are well-dubbed hobnail boots. Personally, I wear them without socks, and now feel I am as tough as the average woman. It saves an enormous amount of sock-mending, one's feet don't get cold when they are working, and an adhesive dressing soon heals any sore spot. I use Willesden canvas leggings to keep my trousers clean, and in wet weather oilskin leggings to keep my knees dry. Somehow if one's knees are wet one is wet all over. I never part with a raincoat and the worse the weather the more I pile on. The best goes inside, the

rest you select according to whether you want warmth, dryness or merely protection from mud. I was once ridiculed for describing the ideal pig pioneer as one who was weatherproof, had horse sense, and was chore-minded. I still cannot think of a better definition.



Housing

I BELIEVE sensible adequate housing is the most important factor in pig farming. The pig increases in size so quickly that a house that will hold twenty pigs in October will only shelter fifteen of them in November, and ten in December. Failure to realize this will lead to pigs overcrowding on a dirty night; chills and coughs. By sensible I mean reasonable ventilation and no bottle-necks. Houses that are in depth rather than width tend to encourage pigs to crowd at the back. A triangular-shaped house may result in small pigs being wedged in the base angles and suffocated. Facing one's house in the right direction is almost as important as the design of the house. Which quarter is your rainy quarter? If it's in the south-west, then face your houses north or east. If you have not realized this already, remember it from now on. It took me twenty years to discover. I may be dumb, but I have completely cleared myself of chills and coughs at last. Pigs can stand a cold wind especially if they have plenty of bedding, but rain one cannot keep out of a house if it is facing towards the rain. The result is that the pigs huddle to the very back of the house, and death and disease follow.



Housing must be mobile

The tendency of the pig to grow out of his housing is worth more than a moment of reflection. How long will it take you to get a new house from your merchant delivered and erected for use? A week is a fair estimate and regardless of the cost, which will be roughly three times that of a home-made house. Serious damage can be done by overcrowding pigs for a week. I lay it down, therefore, as axiomatic that houses should be home made.

The roof is simple. The prime requisite is that it must be weatherproof. The second, for our mobile methods, that it must be reasonably light and easily handled. The answer is corrugated iron in some form. Nissen-hut sections will do. Always buy the longest span within reason and a strong gauge of ordinary corrugated iron to avoid sagging. I can recommend no other roofing. Felt-covered boarding, for example, is heavy and easily breaks, and tarpaulins are quite unreliable in a wind. If you or your neighbour grow a lot of corn, straw bales are available and cheap for the sides of your houses. I disapprove of covering the bales over with wire netting to prevent the pigs undermining the walls. Pigs will only do this if they are short of bedding, so that if they try it, it is a hint to you. Besides, when the house is moved it is doubtful whether the wire netting will be any good again, so that in the end your bale house, with bales valued at two shillings each, will be rather expensive. However, if you are determined on bales I do not blame you. It is as simple as making pigsties with bricks on the nursery floor. Well, perhaps not quite that, as some of us have experienced. The bales must be kept in place by stakes three foot six inches long, driven into the ground. Then there is the matter of roof fall. If one side is made three bales high and the other two bales high, the fall is too steep and the problem of blocking the end presents difficulties. If it is blocked, two bales are entirely given over to the weather, as it is impossible to roof them. If it is not blocked, there is a howling gale coming through that right-angle triangle two feet high and eight feet long. One last point against bale houses. The roof must cover the bales if they are to last, which means four feet of your corrugated roof space is devoted to keeping your walls dry.

Quite the cheapest and warmest house that can be made, especially if one is hedging or if one is working woodland, is the brushwood house. The house is, of course, roofed with corrugated iron, but the sides and back are built of faggots roughly eight feet long, tied in two places securely. Personally, I use old bale twine which all farmers are glad to get rid of. The length of twine as it slips off the bale is just the right length to tie a faggot. That is to say, the faggot will be a handy size to build with. A peculiarity about these faggots is that they must be approximately the same thickness at either end, so when one is making them they should be laid alternately head to tail. It is, of course, a reasonable proposition to use wire for tying the faggots, in particular condemned telephone wire has been strongly recommended to me. It will certainly last virtually for ever, and for that reason I would prefer bale twine and so lessen the risk of cattle deaths from wire swallowing, which were very prevalent when wire was used for hay-baling.

My own experience is that laurels make the best brushwood houses. The leaves make them windproof and dry and prevent decay. Can anyone tell me why pigs will eat and enjoy the top inch of a laurel leaf but will go no further? If other wood is used so that the leaves wither and die, it will be wise to line it with sisalcraft paper. If on first introduction to their new house there is plenty of straw the pigs will leave the sisalcraft alone, although, of course, a sow about to farrow is a law unto herself. The right height for a pig house is three feet six inches, i.e. three feet and more on one side and three feet on the other, to get a good water shoot. Drive four stakes in eighteen inches apart and roughly three feet into the ground, and then ram your faggots between them, leaning the stakes together at the top to give increased rigidity. The back which puzzled us with our bale house can be closed with a triangular-shaped faggot. Remember the high side should be the weather side, so that the wind behind the rain drives the water off the roof by corning to the high end first instead of driving the rain into the roof by blowing from the low one. These remarks may have to be qualified by the fall of the ground. Obviously one wants the roof to shoot on to the lowest side to prevent the water seeping back into the house. The roof may be kept in place with other faggots or

logs; weight it down and, if necessary, tie the weights in place, don't just tie the roof down. The theme song for all this house building may be found in Matt, vii, 24. ['Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.'] One last point: don't try to economize by building your houses in pairs. It is difficult to prevent one house being waterlogged and pigs dislike semi-detached residences. If in the course of months the faggots settle, all one does is to remove the roof and add a faggot either side to bring it to its former height.

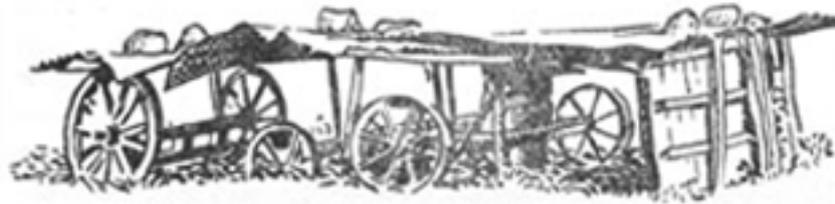
A motto which pioneer pig men might well take to heart is: 'Haul no junk.' Avoid sales and, as far as possible, only buy what you can neither make nor grow. The faggot house is an excellent example of this motto. I bid you find an apt illustration of a suitable pig hut for open-air work, which if I mistake not will be priced at between twenty and thirty pounds. Close your eyes and imagine that a lorry has brought it to the road-head and you have to get it into a piece of derelict woodland, perhaps over a steep slope across a watercourse, and between stumps and dead trunks, and ask yourself how much would be knocked off your house's value, not to mention yourself, before you had it *in situ*. The folly of buying houses is obvious but there are other lines. For example, square-cut, pointed stakes at about a shilling each – not to mention the haulage and carriage to the spot – often tempt the unwary. Clearing brushwood is an arduous enterprise, but if every straight branch of one to two inches in diameter and two feet six to three feet six in length can be used to save you money, instead of burned, how much stronger is your position.

In rough woodland your straighter poles will probably be birch; everyone says they rot quickly, and they do, but they will last as long as you need. Drive them in the other way up to the way they grow, for this stops the water being sucked up the sap channels and makes them last rather longer.

However, haul no junk and faggots from woodland. They are junk on cleared ground, so I do not recommend faggot houses here. Instead, I advocate home-made sectional houses. The height as before, three feet to three feet six inches, the lower the house the warmer, and there is no cleaning out to be done. A house seven feet by five will house one sow to farrow, two sows and their litters from ten days old, and the litters only up to three months old. The wood will cost you about four pounds and the corrugated-iron roof a couple more. Have an opening at the front, but no door. It is a good plan to have a few spare sides, then on a very cold night when the wind is in the north or east, these can be erected across the door at an angle to act as a windbreak. On no account nail up bags in front of the door for this purpose. They are a snare and a delusion. Try it in your own bedroom. The sections of the house may be bolted together, the whole house left rigid and carried from field to field on a buckrake. This is very satisfactory provided the tractor and buckrake are at your call for a whistle! Otherwise I like the house to be erected section by section, a stake driven in at each corner on the inside and the corners kept together and rigid to the stake with wire run through holes in the section, one about a foot from the bottom, the other six inches from the top.

The roof is, as usual, corrugated-iron sheets; the fall should be to one side, which means a difference in height of the two sides of about nine inches. In putting on the roof sheets always remember that the sheet at the front of the house should go on first. The wind blowing from the back of the house is then blowing over instead of into the laps. I used to recommend that these houses be put up in pairs so that corrugated sheets joining the two houses would make a

third shelter, but in-pig sows are the only pigs I know that will sleep in the centre shelter; small pigs use it as an indoor convenience.



Skeleton shelter on wheels

Houses such as these have seen me through four winters practically without casualties except, of course, new-born pigs. I have had a sow farrow in twenty degrees of frost and found her with ten grand pigs at teat in the morning. This leads me to believe that if properly sited, using natural shelter where available, I am safe in recommending them in any part of the British Isles. So much for warmth. I wish I could tell you how to make these same houses cool and airy in the summer. In my opinion it is far harder to keep pigs cool in summer than warm in winter. On a cold winter night the pigs bunch up for warmth. In the hot summer they want to thin out, no pig touching any other hot body, and where are they to spread to? I can only advise you to keep your roofs covered with straw – the straw the pigs nose out for doormats will do – and in hot weather sprinkle your roofs with water. Summer is the time for odd houses. The best I have is an old elevator, the floor corrugated as it is covered with straw, and on the south side a length of strong pig wire with canvas laced on it. This gives a tent-like shade and in very hot weather the bottom can be raised on an old oil drum to give a through draught. I hope to make a similar shelter from an old hay loader. Old wagons provide cool shade. It all sounds very odd and very untidy. It is both, but if it means that the pigs don't pant I am content. Much can be done by using shady hedges to the full; it may mean altering the fencing along one side to include a hedge. Try and have a drum of water handy to each group of three houses or so, and in the middle of a hot day chuck a bucket of water over the pigs as they lie. Filling drinking troughs in the heat is a mistake, but sluicing the shelters is well repaid. Finally, and this is absolutely the end, the wise pig-man who will note his pigs' requirements in hot weather will quite frequently visit his pigs at night and will not wait until the bad weather. There is no question that pigs love fresh air *per se*. I have found strong pigs sleeping in the open in February, in nests of five or six with houses half-empty and full of straw. This chapter is full of meat, but I think there is little exaggeration. The pig will tell you – watch him!



The Sow

I AM giving you a special chapter on the sow. If she does her job well most of your troubles are over. If you prove a good lieutenant to her, quick to understand her requirements and treating her with the respect she deserves, she will do her job properly. Let no man set himself as wiser than the sow, unless he be one of a family of eight born on the same day, all raised to useful maturity! There are two ways to buy a sow. You may buy a sow and litter at market: then you may be reasonably sure she is prolific and a good mother. There are snags, of course. Make sure that all the pigs are her pigs. Usually the family likeness exists and I should never risk a litter with half saddle-back and half white pigs. If there are a reasonable number of gilts in the litter this may be the best way of founding your herd, but if sows and litters are selling well it may be expensive. The other way is to buy a bunch of weaners and keep the gilts. In my opinion all gilts have the capacity to be good mothers. If they fail it is usually bad management. The practical blokes will always aver that the smallest gilt in the litter makes the best mother. The science behind the experience is that in each gilt the growth factor and the mothering factor are combined, and if the growth factor is in short measure, Nature has probably made it up in the motherhood factor. In addition, she will probably all her life be active and a good forager.

I myself prefer the second method for a beginner, as when they farrow in seven or eight months' time you will know your pigs and they will know you – as it were, personally – a very important factor. As soon as you have bought your gilts, begin thinking about a boar. While it is very nice to be the only man in the regiment in step, it may be an expensive hobby, so that I can only advise you to remember that if you choose a black breed you must expect to get £2 per head less for your stores. Buy your boar on the teat and choose a long boar from a large level family. If you cannot buy in this way, go to someone who will sell so. I would rather buy a crossbred blue pig in this way than a pig in a poke from a pedigree herd. When you have bought your boar turn him out with the gilts. He should be a month younger than them and – provided there is sufficient trough room and you see fair play for the first day or two – nothing but good will come of the early mating. The normal thing will be for most of the gilts to farrow at from ten to twelve months, the litter will be small, an average of six may be considered good, but the mother will learn her job with a small family, and by the time she is eighteen months old she will have caught up in size with the late farrowing. The advantage of having a boar a month younger than the gilts is that probably the date of conception is delayed one month.

Let us return to you with your batch of gilts and young boar. Feed them three pounds of nuts or meal, provided they have foraging, otherwise it will have to be more. Twelve-weeks-old gilts should certainly eat this amount; the pig does the bulk of his growing between eight and sixteen weeks and it is well-nigh impossible to overfeed him. Possibly a month before farrowing, if grazing is ample, you may be able to reduce By half a pound, but it should be done reluctantly, and only if they are getting lazy about grazing and their food. I always love

to see a batch come galloping and barking up at the first rattle of the bucket. As farrowing time approaches, which is shown by the sow dropping in the belly and making an udder, watch the dung closely. If the grass is fresh and green there should be no cause for worry, but dung should be of a healthy human texture, if it is hard and dry something must be done at once. If you can, buy roots and cut concentrates by half, and give all the roots that the pigs will clear. If roots are hard to get, cider apples, by the by, are as good as roots. Then use Epsom salts, a small tea-cupful in the drinking water. You will be wise to experiment with Epsom salts early, so that you will know how much to give if the gilts are constipated after farrowing. As the gilts have been growing you will have been making houses and it is a good plan to erect them in the paddock where they are running, so that they can inspect them, rub against them and be at home in them.

Do not hurry your expectant mother away at the last minute into quarters by herself. You will be lucky if you succeed without the help of three men and perhaps a dog. You will be doubly lucky if she is not back with her friends next morning. When a gilt is going to farrow she will find a secluded house and farrow. If she is a senior girl she may drive her room-mates out and farrow where she is. You will know she is going to farrow when she starts to make up her bed. My advice to you is to go home and forget about her until next morning: I know there are many who will counsel removing the pigs as they are born, tying the navel and removing the eye teeth. These things just cannot be done in a hut in a wood. If the sow is not naturally a good mother, out her; but if her bowels and muscles are right, she can be trusted to make a good job alone and the presence of a nervous human hovering in the background will only upset her and make her restless. A sow likes to be out of earshot of other pigs when she farrows, as then she knows that any squeaking demands her attention. A litter of a few days old in close proximity is sometimes disastrous – feeding time approaches with the usual squeaking and the farrowing mother next door fears it is her mismanagement that causes the noise. Her restlessness upsets her babies that are born and possibly causes one or two others to be born dead. So see that your gilts can get seclusion if they wish.

The morning after a sow has farrowed get her out of her house. If necessary, block up the door and do not let her back until she has dunged and made water. It may take fifteen or twenty minutes of your valuable time, but the alternative is one or two dead pigs the following morning. The first dung is always very stiff and hard but it should improve with a laxative diet. This morning promenade should be a daily routine for three days. The first three days are crucial and with reasonable management all pigs alive at three days old should be reared to pork or bacon. I think it is probable that if a sow has an accident and loses half her litter on one occasion, then at the next farrowing you will have to be careful that she does not lose the same number again. It may be a kind of mastitis in those quarters. Bottle-rearing pigs is a sound proposition and if your sow begins to lose pigs for no reason I should advise you to remove 25 per cent of the strongest and bottle-rear them until the sow is feeding and dunging normally, then put them back and watch them for twenty-four hours: probably the sow will rear them without further trouble. I have heard of pig-men moaning over cannibalism. In my opinion a pig will only eat her own or any other live pig if she is shockingly starved, particularly of protein. It is the normal function of a good mother to clear up a dead pigling or two with the after-birth, and there is no need to get windy or run to your neighbour about it. If two or three sows farrow on the same night it is a good practice to even up the litters next morning, but be wary of putting three-days-old pigs on a freshly farrowed sow. I used to run an electric wire around a new farrowed sow to give her seclusion, and prevent other sows pinching her food. I have abandoned this as I think that anything that makes one think a

newly farrowed sow is all right for the first three days is a snare and a delusion, after that she will fend for herself.



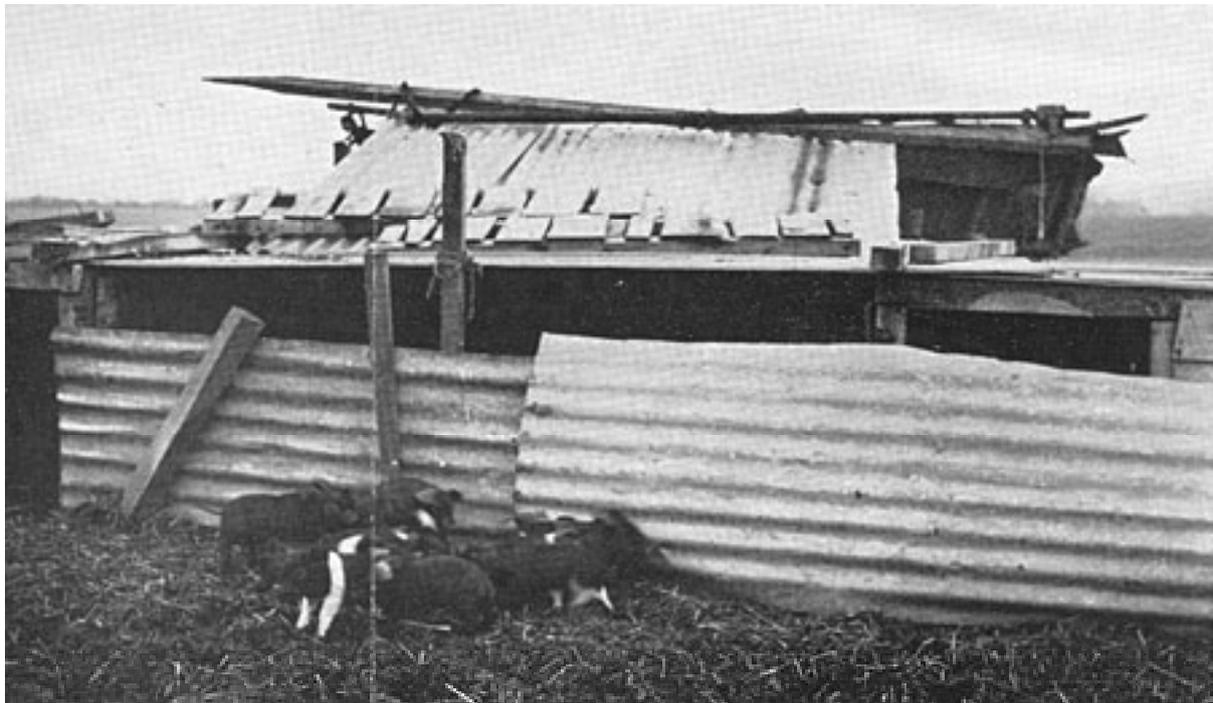
viii. Another roofing idea suitable for the summer



ix. Feeding Pigs fattening as they grow



x. The sow. Winter or summer your pig should be as comfortable as this



xi. Management. A winter family, one day old

At ten days to a fortnight, particularly in winter, it will be found that two sows and litters of approximately the same age will set up house together. This may be suitably encouraged by penning the sows and litters to one house. Feed meagrely until the sow begins to lose condition – four or five pounds is enough. The sow will be keen on her food and grazing. Something is wrong if after the first three days she spends her days with her piglings. Whilst

mother is having her breakfast you can inspect the family, observe their dung and rustle them around with the hand to encourage activity. The weather, of course, must be respected, but by and large on the third day it is a good thing to turn them right out of the house and let them find their way home. At a week or ten days old a handful of nuts may be thrown in; when the sow returns and consumes them the little pigs will be interested. This leads the way to creep feeding at three weeks old. A creep may be made with two live wires and an electric fence all to itself, but I prefer one made with eight seven-foot gate hurdles, two feet six inches high, surrounded by an electric wire and with openings at the corners. It is completely sow-proof for one thing, and it also trains piglings to be confined. With a creep such as this it is simple to capture one or all, as required.

Now we come to castration. This needs careful planning as there are no four-foot walls to hold back angry mothers. The evening before the house entrance should be prepared so that the piglings may be secured by a sheet of corrugated iron across the front, kept in position by stakes. The stakes must be put in the night before so that the piglings can be secured in a twinkling. Also the night before, make a double-wired pen with a fence all of its own and a good battery about an eighth of an acre in extent and at least a hundred yards from the scene of operations. The next morning early, before the piglings are thinking about breakfast (remember they are less than a month old), the G.I. sheets are slipped in front of the houses and the sows drawn away to their pen with a thin dribble of nuts, the greater part of their breakfast being scattered in the pen. Do not on any account try to drive the sows to their pen: for your own sake the less they are upset the better. I have in the past been mauled by an angry sow and it is not pleasant. Being of a timorous disposition I like four men in the castration party. Number Four can then mind the sows. On the last occasion I was inside the house catching when 'prepare to repel raider' was called. There was a scrambling and rattling and a voice: 'We're all right, Dad, we are on the roof.' Poor old Dad had to catch pigs with his fingers crossed while an angry sow prowled around and the corrugated iron seemed really absurdly inadequate.

This is all a good story and perfectly true, and if it remains in your memory to remind you that castration is an important and difficult matter, it is well worth its place. However, with greater experience we now castrate at from four to eight days old. At this age the piglings are easily caught and make little noise. Feed your sow twenty yards from the house, run a tractor and trailer with a covered box on it up to the house, slip the boar pigs into the box and go two hundred yards away out of earshot. If there are two or more litters to be done the piglings should be colour marked to identify them. The piglings bleed less and swell less and, of course, struggle less. Castration is a very simple business and a good safety-razor blade is the best tool I know. Pay someone who knows the job to do the first few for you, but make up your mind that you will start at number six, for example, and once begun, do not let up.

Bedding: provided she has ample time to make her bed, it is impossible to give a sow too much bedding. What she does not require she will pitch out of her house. Leave her arrangements unmolested for two days, then in cold weather give her a little more, perhaps a third of a bale, every other day. The little pigs bury themselves in it and it makes a kind of blanket when the sow is away. I have known a sow farrow and rear her pigs with eighteen degrees of frost, in a half-inch wooden shed, corrugated-iron roof, but plenty of bedding. You may notice that whenever you put bedding into a house the sow immediately pushes some out. Don't be discouraged. She is putting out a doormat and garden path so that the piglings will not be belly-deep in mud when they venture out.

One last point – perhaps two. You may say that it is not worth my wasting my time, they are so obvious. Don't have month-old pigs and newly-born pigs in the same pen or so situated that the old pigs can get to the new mother. I have known the older pigs learn to suck the sow before she had farrowed and afterwards she let them suck with her own, to my loss. This sort of thing will happen when everything has turned out so simple that nothing is worth worrying about. Second point: when a sow starts to make up her bed never try to move her. Bring her bedding, erect a roof over her head as quickly as possible, if necessary. Do not so much as growl at her. If she is farrowing in a compound house with five or six dry sows in it, put up an extra 'lean-to' and bed it down well. The dry sows will be in it in the morning whilst mother is lying triumphantly with her family in the warmest part of the old house. Never wean before eight weeks, and in winter, when the weather is bad, it is a good plan to introduce the boar to the sows. He will not hurt the piglings, will produce extra warmth and by twelve weeks all the sows will have been served.

This chapter leaves you with a comfortable, benevolent feeling, does it not? I felt comfortable and benevolent when I wrote it. To finish up, I want you to imagine wet hell let loose. A ton of bedding has just been delivered: you have not had time to cover it, and it is saturated. Your houses, built three parts of the way down a steep hill, are being sluiced with water and veritable rivers. What do we do? Well, the bales are probably not soaked through. In any case wet straw is better than mud. Try and always have some spare houses at the very top, built where the bracken grows, and if you have in dry weather cut that bracken and tripodded it, you will thank God for that bracken which sheds the water better than straw. Then those pigs in the bottom houses – watch them, don't wait until it is dark. Take up the electric wire on the top side so they can climb to safety if they will, and encourage them to pass the fence boundary by a trough with some food in it. Fence-fearful pigs are much more worry than fence-breakers. Taken by and large, if pigs are accustomed to look after themselves they will come through an emergency pretty well, but if they are shut up they will die like sheep. An emergency is an emergency but mark you there should be only one the first year, possibly one the second, and none thereafter.



Feeding

THE difficulty in writing a chapter on feeding is that a year or two after it is written the situation may have brought an unsuspected food supply on the market.

Since I claim to be an authority because I have kept pigs, rather than keeping pigs to prove my authority, I have done little experimenting with strange foods. I have never even used Tottenham pudding or waste dates. However, there are main principles, and this I would lay down with a heavy hand. A new food will never hurt a pig unless you force or entice him to eat it by mixing it with something that he likes. I think it is a wise plan never to mix foods but to let the pig balance his own ration. Take meat and bone-meal, for example. They will tell you in college that meat and bone-meal should be eliminated in the final stages of fattening as it tends to make salt bacon or yellow pork or something equally obtuse. But give a pig his food in separate troughs and he will give up his meat and bone-meal, which he does not like as well as cereals, as soon as the growth urge abates. Neither should a pig be starved into eating what he naturally rejects. I should never recommend this on the open-air system, apart from the folly of trying to fatten a pig by starving. Because if you try to starve an electrically fenced pig, he will walk into your neighbour's growing potatoes, and with a bunch of growing pigs that might prove expensive.

Given a variety of foods and no mixing, I do not think one can go wrong in pig feeding, especially on open-air work with fresh ground and a modicum of grazing. The beginner would be wise to give a wider variety than is usual. Barley meal is, of course, the stock feed for pigs, but if oatmeal and ground wheat are available, well, try them and note which is popular and which rejected. Then there is millers' offal, middlings or sharps, call it what you will. These are included in every proprietary pig food, and there is no food that it will pay better to feed on the self-choice system. I shall be most surprised if your pigs having meal and protein pay more than the smallest attention to millers' offal, provided the grazing which is an alternative form of roughage is reasonably good: 10 per cent is all they will eat, and I am talking of the best you can buy, not imported Plate sharps. Nevertheless, do not reject them as utterly useless: the very fact of their uninteresting nature may be a help and guidance. If, for example, one wishes to make the most of potatoes or roots in fattening, wheat offal, which one knows is safe and contains minerals and some protein, may be a good staple feed to use in dry feeders *ad lib*. If one is feeding proprietary balanced ration it is advisable to use two different makes. This gives inside information: one is apt to rate a food by the illustrated advertisement and it is a good plan to get the pig's opinion. Personally, I should recommend

the beginner to use straight foods unmixed. He can if he likes put a proprietary food in one trough and he can then determine the pig's opinion. I have heard it said that if left to his own devices a pig will eat too much meal and become overfat. Provided the growing pig has access to animal protein, this is not so. If a pig is becoming overfat, limit his food so that he eats more grass, and do not include in his ration millers' offal, which does the same job as the grass at considerable expense. In my edict on mixed foods I would make one exception. I have always found nuts a very useful feed for in-pig sows. Spread on the ground, there is opportunity for each sow to take her ration, and I know of no better way of getting batches of pigs from field to field than leading them with a bucket of nuts.

Roughly speaking, pigs will begin to look for food for themselves at three weeks old. If before that they are nibbling at nuts thrown into their house it is good training. The younger you can get pigs to feed the better, but there is no need to strain for effect. It is important to have a creep reasonably adjacent to the pigling sleeping quarters and to have in that creep plenty of room. Little pigs are like little boys. They often have a nasty streak of bully. It is not when you are there and have just put down the food that it occurs, but in between whiles, and last thing at night, when perhaps the troughs are getting rather empty. I like dry feeders for young pigs, the sort where the pigs lift a hatch with their noses which protects the food from weather and rooks, but do be sure that you have ample room and have a few open troughs as well. You will find that the pigs prefer these, and I have a suspicion that the bullies come up behind a 'new chum' at the dry feeders and nip his leg, and if the 'new chum' is of a nervous disposition he rather avoids the dry feeders. I find that a dry feeder with seven feeding hatches is sufficient for twenty-eight piglings. This is important. One is apt to conclude that because for the matter of an hour or two the dry feeders are unused, one feeder will do thirty-five or forty pigs. But if you look, one or two pigs will be doing less well than the others.

The creep should contain the best straight foods you can buy. If the price is right, flake maize should be there as well as barley meal, and fish meal as well as meat and bone-meal. Don't forget the drink: creeped pigs drink a lot; a bucket to a bucket of meal in the winter is a fair ration, and in the summer more. There are other growth stimulants which I like, notably skim milk powder and cod liver oil. Both these foods give pigs a bloom. They help the skin to act, and they are available summer and winter. They should be used only from the ages of six to twelve weeks old, the period when the pig is growing faster than he can consume food to keep up his constitution, and when they have stopped they should be stopped over a period of fourteen days.

Now we come to the subject of dairy by-products, notably whey and skim milk. My advice to open-air pig-men in regard to whey is to proceed with caution. A gallon of whey, provided it is good whey (and who is to decide that, since there is no legal standard for whey?), is of the same feeding value as a pound of barley meal and is ten times as heavy. This is an important matter when food has to be hauled along tracks and headlands. The less pigs are encouraged to drink beyond their requirements the better. I think probably whey has a value of its own when fed in the sty which is not apparent under fresh air and fresh grazing conditions. I have never known pigs miss their whey under these conditions, provided other food was ample, and if I have got to buy I would prefer the food that the pigs liked to the one that was cheaper. These remarks naturally do not refer to the cheese-maker who has the whey to use. Under these circumstances I should reduce the meal and pour the whey on the dry meal in the troughs. I should use the dry feeders for high-protein food.

With regard to skim milk, there is no doubt that home-produced skim milk from unpasteurized milk is the finest animal protein obtainable. Probably it is the best young pig food one can possibly get. It is worth while any pig-man with his own dairy exploring the possibilities of a cream market. I must admit I have not used factory skim milk since the war, but I am told it has a constipating effect on pigs, sour though it is. This would seem to show that it has lost much of its merit with the various heat processes, and I can only recommend caution again. Do not for pity's sake undertake to use so many hundred gallons per week. Better far to begin by hauling small quantities yourself until you know how the pigs are going to absorb it. This is where money is lost in pig feeding. One buys large quantities of apparently cheap food, for one must take the quantity to get the cheapness. It is perishable and by the time it is used has lost much of its merit and may possibly be harmful.

These remarks apply also to the use of swill. Early in the war I instituted a swill round in one or two villages, but I found that it worked out at 80 per cent of cabbage stumps and potato peelings. However, if swill is available from army camps, hotels or restaurants on reasonable terms, do not neglect it. Remember the haulage of swill weighs very heavy, and the preparation is another snag, for one is obliged by law to cook it. Also do not forget that it is probably short of protein, so give the pigs their normal access to this. At the first pig farm I worked on, the swill used to come from some high-class London hotel, and always contained broken glass, sardine-tin openers and a spoon and fork or two. Never did I hear of a pig suffering from swallowing these; pigs are very careful what they allow into their mouths.

The normal foods which the farm can find for pigs are grass roots and grain. If grass is long enough for a cow to graze it is of little use to a pig. A pig will nibble off the clover leaves and the bottom grass, but cocksfoot and stalky ryegrass are anathema. With good grazing, sows will do with a couple of pounds of concentrates per day, but younger pigs cannot replace more than a pound of their concentrates with grass. However, as I have mentioned elsewhere, on grass they must be, to keep them clear of mud, and when they go they will leave unsurpassable cattle keep.

I think roots are excellent food for pigs, provided they have adequate proteins. Dry sows will make a splendid job folding swedes and kale, but smaller pigs must have the roots hauled to them. Fodder beet, of course, is admirable for all pigs at all times, provided they have protein supplement and provided their dung keeps normal. If they become too loose, give additional meal; probably in this case 'sharps' would fill the bill. Use your eyes and your common sense and forget what your neighbour or his pig-man told you; there are no 'cans' or 'can'ts' in pig feeding, except what the pig tells you, and he must have good alternatives other than starvation. The normal and the best way to feed roots is to haul a load outside their pen and throw in so many shovelfuls per day. Hauling in a load at a time is possible after the middle of March when the roots have finished ripening and provided the pens are not too muddy. Mangold, of course, should not be fed until the end of January. Raw potatoes are an admirable pig food. In 1946 when the Ministry of Food had large stocks to dispose of I had five trucks delivered in one week. I dumped them loose in two-ton heaps and let the pigs help themselves. The pigs fouled them hardly at all and there was certainly far less wastage than if I had stored them at the farm and hauled a ration out each day. Normally, however, the right way to feed pigs potatoes is in the ground where they grow. Keep the pigs close behind the potato digger as they do not like green potatoes. They will clear what they see first and then will see what will turn up. So far I have never had to feed potatoes undug. If a crop is completely unmarketable I should advise moving the ground with the spinner, or a plough, so

as to ease the pig's work a little. He will eat more potatoes and use less time and energy in their consumption which will in the end save you money.

Whole grain is not to be despised as a pig food but it needs careful feeding. It must always be scattered as one would poultry corn, on fresh ground every day. The corn that the pigs miss then takes root and grows, and a few weeks later they eat it in the form of a green shoot. It is worth while to throw a few sheaves of oats or wheat into your pig pens and next morning see how much has come through them whole. I will wager this will be little or none. The pig has to deal with each grain individually to get it out of the husk. You will notice I have made no mention of barley, because barley has awns which are apt to get into a pig's throat and inconvenience him. Anyone who has swallowed an awn while harvesting barley will know what I mean. Beans and peas are the best grain I know to allow pigs to combine. They miss absolutely nothing and if barley meal is on hand in dry feeders it will be found that while doing at top rate their consumption of barley meal is just about half normal. Last year I turned the pigs in to harvest some flat dredge corn. I gave them normal dry feeding and protein as I did not want to induce pigs, by hunger, to go burrowing into wet corn. I found I cut their meal consumption by half and this year there is no sign of self-sown corn.

In view of the fact that water is the heaviest haul I feed all pigs dry. This saves the labour entailed in mixing food. In summer or windy weather pigs appreciate a bucket of water poured on each bucket of meal. One trough should be reserved for water alone and it should be noted if at the next meal this is drunk dry and, if so, rather more water should be given. Taken by and large, a bucket of water to a bucket of meal is a fair ration for pigs except in summer, when they will probably drink twice that amount. Sows should be allowed to drink their fill twice per day and will probably drink five to six gallons in hot weather. The exception to this is when the sows are feeding potatoes and getting no meal at all, when the moisture from the potatoes will be sufficient for them. It is a waste of time to water pigs in the heat of a summer day. They will fight a lot and waste a lot. A better plan is to throw half a dozen buckets of water over them as they lie in the shade.

If one's pigs have reasonable grazing or roots to nibble at, it is not necessary to space one's feeding out to near-equal intervals. Pigs are wise animals and are not enthusiastic early risers. In hot weather the pigs want to be fed and settled down comfortably before the sun gets powerful. In normal weather the second feed may be reasonably early – about 3 p.m. – but it is a wise pig-man who slips back about six o'clock to look his pigs over. If pigs are going to break fences it will be in the evening, and the most usual cause is, I find, lack of water. On a really filthy morning don't go near your pigs until nine or ten; and then, if perhaps it has stopped raining and blowing for a little, give the pigs all they will eat and a bit more. If the weather has come back in the afternoon, then out in your sou'wester for a look and a listen but do not call the pigs out to feed: they are better where they are. Personally, I should half-fill the troughs before departing noiselessly. It is small points of this sort that make pigs do and which are very difficult to make part of a routine for an employee. That is why I recommend self-contained work in charge of one man, preferably a partner.

There is one natural food which I have not mentioned – acorns. If you have oaks in your wood, or your neighbour oaks in his park, don't forget the acorns. Your pigs certainly will not. Pigs like acorns as much as beans or maize, and if, in the autumn, you are worried by fence-breaking it is probably acorns the pigs are after. The only way to harvest acorns is to turn the pigs under the oak trees; do not for a moment consider getting your wife and children to pick

them up, or the village children on a Saturday morning. While your pigs are grazing good acorns I should advise that you give them plain sharps as an additional food. If they are hungry they will eat it, but if the acorn crop is good, it may reduce your feeding bill considerably while it lasts.

Before finishing this chapter it might be wise to consider briefly the main principles of pig feeding in times of national emergency. At these times there is a hubbub of foolish talking so that cool thinking and wise action is necessary. There are two sorts of emergency – a slump and a war. Immediately a war is declared, feeding-stuffs disappear in a matter of days, and everyone tells everyone else to kill their pigs. The impulse that absorbs the feeding-stuffs also raises the price of pig-meat, so that it is wise to pack off everything that is saleable and concentrate on the sows and litters and new-weaned pigs. The national 'flap' will have made everyone almost uncomfortably conscious of their duties as citizens, and the wise man will start collecting kitchen waste from hotels, schools, boarding houses, etc., whilst everybody else is dithering. The one feeding pipe which must not choke is the high-protein one. There should not be much difficulty in assuring this if one visits the production point personally. Remember one must be less choosy. There is a prejudice against meat and bone-meal, so that it is probably the best line to pursue.

It is also well to remember that cows can and do produce reasonably on hay, especially if high-protein grass is stimulated with artificials, so that if cows are kept their concentrates allocation may be diverted to the pigs. Pigs do very nicely on dairy cubes. The long-term policy is to plan to step up one's own cereal production, and this the pioneer can do without having to worry as to the hows of harvesting. The pigs can and will harvest it themselves but, remember, go slow on barley: the awns have a choking effect. And when I say cereals, remember the home-grown protein beans and peas (winter beans in the autumn), and get them in early, in September if possible. Lime the land by hook or by crook if you suspect its acidity, but do not let this delay your sowing. If necessary, lime after sowing before the beans are up. Spring beans or peas in the spring. Beans stand up best and keep out of trouble. Peas are apt to rot in a weedy field, but peas can be sown up to the end of May.



A last look round

Don't worry much about roots and remember, particularly fodder beet, if it is not singled, is virtually useless. There will be plenty of breadcrumbs and potato peelings and probably surplus potatoes for six months in the year. Remember, by the by, that by statute kitchen

waste must be boiled, and make arrangements for this to be carried out before the official mind has caught up with the flap, but don't leave your pigs starving until the boiler comes.

The second emergency is a slump, which many wiser men than me believe is just around the corner. In my opinion this slump is certain to come and the more eager the planning to avoid it the more severe it will be in the long run. The slump at any rate will knock the feeding-stuffs trade silly, and merchants will be anxious to serve men who keep their heads and have the situation under control. In my opinion the wise man will keep to his normal sales, being careful that everything he sells is top quality. Every week he sells pigs he will be wise to buy the same approximate number, provided, of course, that the stores market has slumped too. He is thus doing his individual best to steady the market and he is buying cheap stores to offset possible loss on his home-grown pigs. During a slump, opportunity should be taken of overhauling one's breeding stock and selling the elderly or the disappointing. Overhaul your methods and make sure that every pig is doing all the time and that the cultivation and manuring are giving their full value. Do not reduce your stock or activities; with minimum overheads and maximum returns for manure and cultivation, your production cost is bound to be lower than the sty-men.



Managing a Pioneer Herd

IT IS a human failing, I fear, this joy we all take in giving other people advice. The motive is usually good but the advice often deplorable. I therefore counsel pig pioneers to discourage cronies. People who tell you what you can and cannot do, what pigs will and will not eat – I have said elsewhere, and I repeat it, that nothing a pig eats voluntarily will ever harm him. See your pigs have the materials to give themselves a meat and veg. dinner and they will thrive. You alone know what the pigs are eating, what they were eating last week, what their dung was like yesterday, and you are the safest person to advise on how your own pigs are, so do not funk the responsibility. There are three things you should watch: the dung, the coats and the habits of your pigs. The dung is infinitely the most important. A pig's dung should be not unlike human dung, a pyramid need not worry you, a scour should be traced if possible to the individual pig, and undue constipation, producing dung like a race-horse, should act as a danger light. If all pigs in a batch are very loose I should advise you to give them meat and bone-meal fed in a separate trough. Meat and bone-meal has a costive effect. If constipation is general, introduce roots or apples into the ration. If these are not readily available, add a dessertspoonful of Epsom salts per pig to the drinking water. If all the pigs are normal but you suddenly find one very bad case of constipation, watch each pig with your eye until you find him. He will be slow out of the house, tend to isolate himself and come to the trough last. Probably he is running a high temperature.

My advice in such cases is to catch him and isolate him immediately, but give him two friends to share his house. This is most important. One must take the risk of its being something infectious. With properly-run open-air pigs it seldom is: a lone pig that is a sick pig quickly becomes a dead pig. He frets for his mates, he is nearly always cold, no one but the pig ever understands that a bunch of five or eight pigs can keep themselves ten times as warm as one pig. So remove three pigs, the sick one and two others, into a house filled almost from floor to roof with clean straw and leave them unfed for at least twenty-four hours. Next morning when you appear with some appetizing slops with a basis of milk and linseed oil, your invalid will feed. If he does not, it is because he has been ailing for a day or two longer and you have not noticed it.

I am now going to say a shocking thing: for goodness' sake don't send for the vet. Pigs are the worst possible patients for a vet. They cannot easily have their temperatures taken or be given medicine. The management routine of pigs is nothing like as standardized as that, for instance, of cows: so the vet is working in the dark and tends to fall back on his theoretical knowledge, hand out a fancy name and a box of pills and also, of course, a bill which, if the pig dies, as it probably will, will make it an expensive day for you, particularly as you are still completely in the dark as to why this thing has come upon you – or rather your pig.

The beginner will be wise to repeat to himself several times a day: there is no such thing as disease in pigs, there is only mismanagement. The statement needs qualification. I know all about swine fever and erysipelas, but both these diseases are, first and foremost, diseases of mismanagement. Personally, I think that inoculation against swine fever is wrong in principle as it gives the owner an unwarranted feeling of security, and whilst he may escape swine fever, there are the other diseases of mismanagement which his pigs may catch. Swine fever almost always makes its first appearance among newly-weaned pigs that have had a setback. First one dies and two more both look rather seedy. By the time the second two have died and the rest of the batch are on the sick list the disease has got a good hold and will probably end when the old boar dies. If pigs start dying after a day or two's sickness, send for the vet and arrange to send every pig that is healthy for slaughter at once. Inoculation at this stage is quite useless. There may be a danger in waiting until a report comes back from the Ministry. They have been known to return a negative report in spite of swine fever being present. Don't be dissuaded from your purpose. Remember, pound notes don't die from swine fever and turn all the pigs you can into pound notes.



Expensive mistakes

I must add one more point to this. Never sell ailing pigs or runts. If you sell them you may be making trouble for yourself and other people. If they go away and do well you would have done better to keep them; if they die you will certainly hear about it. A bad pig should always live or die with you. Then you get the experience and do not make the same mistake again. On a well-run pig farm no pig will die after it is four days old and the vet's bill will be under one pound per month.

The second point an owner should watch is the pig's coat. If pigs come out in the morning with muddy coats or, worse still, with steaming coats, something is seriously wrong. A heavy lack-lustre coat is usually a sign of scour, and dry scurfy coats mean constipation. Muddy coats in the morning, and steaming coats, invariably mean damp and cramped houses and insufficient bedding and the cure is obvious: extra straw and housing at once, please, before the midday siesta!

Watch your pigs for odd habits. If they dung around the edge of the pen it means that they are cramped in their pen and need more room. Watch where they graze and what they graze. Listen at feeding time. When pigs start to squeak at the first rattle of a bucket I am worried. They should not be as hungry as that. It means more food or more grazing. The sound of unrest in the pig pens after dark always requires investigation and action. It may mean hunger, but more probably insufficient housing and bedding in bad weather.



xii. The normal farm. Sows and litters get their noses with the couch (see plate I)



xiii. The normal farm. Winter oats following the couch



xiv. Swedes and kale. Another first crop on derelict land



xv. The normal farm. Dry sows folding off swedes and kale

Pigs grow so fast that they have a much larger than usual amount of respiration from the skin and are always getting rid of waste tissue. This causes the rubbing for which pigs are famous and which should be encouraged by the provision of a rubbing centre, such as an old mowing machine or horse hoe. At the same time there are skin diseases going the rounds of the pig farms which, from time to time – as, for instance, by the importation of a boar – may worry

even the pioneer on his virgin ground. I am in favour of curing all skin troubles internally. It is well known, for instance, that cod liver oil and milk powder give newly-weaned pigs a lovely coat. These are the pigs that will suffer, and cod liver oil and milk powder are the best cure.

Pigs have a name for mischief. They certainly show humour and originality in their games, and I have known them rip a Willesdon canvas sheet in shreds because I believe they liked the tearing noise. But what most people mean by mischief is rooting with their noses, and here I contend the pig is far too wise to waste his time unnecessarily. A bunch of pigs may sometimes do a little nuzzling near a fence when they are planning an escapade and are wondering whether the wire is alive – a kind of council-of-war nuzzling. This is not deep or widespread. They will root if they require grit or dry earth. They will root (but only if they are very hungry) to get the nitrogen nodules from the roots of clover in winter. But, mainly, pigs root because the digestible vegetation is below the surface of the ground. Couch, for example, which is quite useless as stock food for cattle or sheep, is nuzzled out by pigs. Docks, again: pigs will literally go mining to get out an old dock, digging the earth away a foot around and going down a foot deep. This is about the cheapest method there is of cleaning an old pasture foul with these weeds.

I was taught and have always found that January and July are the best months for farrowing sows. Farrowed in January the piglings are weaned sometime in March when the weather is becoming springlike, and in July the piglings get a good start before the winter. On the other hand, I am inclined to think that June and December – which, with its rain and cold, is hard on the piglings – are the most profitable months. Hard stores are then available for the cheese-makers in April and, farrowing again in May and June, they are not really full value until there is an E in the month and pork butchers are interested. I know one farmer who farrows sixty or seventy sows in a period of a month or six weeks as others lamb their ewes. Every night he goes round with a torch and evens out the litters born that day. This he does with amazing success, using huts made of sisalcraft paper laid on strong wire netting. I must admit that I would never have the nerve to carry out such an experiment and prefer to have my sows coming in batches of four or five. This gives me an ideal batch of young pigs to run together.

When you wean, always move the sow and leave the little pigs in their home. As Stanley Welkin used to say, which of us children would not have done far better if, when schooldays came, our parents had been sent away and we had been left to absorb knowledge at home! Seriously, though, one has only to try the opposite plan and move the little pigs to realize the mistake. The piglings gallop around calling for their mother, refusing to be comforted and it only needs a cold storm or two to lay the foundations for pneumonia. When you wean the sows move them out of earshot of the piglings. Otherwise at feeding times the sows will call the piglings, and they will go through your careful fencing like bullets through cheese!

We have spent so many pages seeing pigs into the world, and watching them grow and thrive, that I think we may contemplate the art of selling them. First of all, you have got to select the pigs to sell. Make no mistake about it, I have found only too often drafting pigs requires time and planning. First of all, you must make a pen using eight or ten 7 ft. by 2 ft. 6 in. hurdles, nailed together in your spare time. The wood will cost you 3s. and it will take you twenty minutes to make one. If you buy them ready made they will cost 12s. each. Secondly, you must get your pigs used to the pen by feeding them or watering them in it for a day or two;

and, best of all, by shutting them in it and handling them quietly in it. Range pigs sometimes get panic-stricken when first they find themselves close penned, and if this is twenty-four hours or so before you pen them for drafting so much the easier for the drafting. It is wise to move pigs when they are hungry and lead them with a bucket and some nuts, dropping a few every ten or twenty yards. An assistant following the pigs can keep them moving forward.

So we come to the 'when' and the 'how' to sell pigs. If you have black pigs you must either turn them into bacon weight and send them to the factory yourself, or else sell them at pork weight at a time when both pork and bacon men may want that class of pig, roughly speaking when there is an E in the month. I prefer to sell pigs at auction where quality plays its part rather than measurements only, but if this is done it is wise to arrange with the auctioneer to weigh the pigs on arrival so that you may be quite sure what you are being offered for them. If prices are bad and money is needed, it is no bad plan to reinvest a third of the selling price in more young pigs; which, of course, will be isolated and treated as potential sources of trouble. In this way you get some of the advantages as well as the disadvantages of a disappointing market.

One final word in this chapter. Pay great attention to your water supply and perpetually consider how you can get the greatest quantity at the lowest cost. I am thinking, for instance, of a hundred-gallon tank filling from a tap while the driver finds a job close by. He probably has to leave his job three or four times to see how his tank is filling, otherwise he returns at the end of an hour to find that the pipe has fallen out of the tank, which is still virtually empty. This sort of thing goes on where the boss is manager and not working – and do not let it enmesh you. Water troubles are at their minimum in winter, so winter is the time to plan for the following summer. If the only supply is from a tap, then for pity's sake instal a two- or three-hundred-gallon tank – an old oil tank will do – fitted with a two- or three-inch tap. Your supply tank can fill all night if necessary, but when you run your water cart into position in the morning it fills in a matter of minutes from the large taps. During the First World War I had the good fortune whilst stationed in Burma to go on a strategic march to the frontier of China. All our transport was on elephants and pack-ponies. We marched fifteen miles per day, and when we were in practice put up camp in fifteen minutes. That is the management idea I want to leave with you. As you drive a nail, or tie a string, say to yourself this has all to come down in a month; all is secure, but all is easily packed and moved. Comfortable enough for you to sleep there yourself. Mobility so that one man can move the pig camp, and two men can do it with enjoyment.



Pioneer Pigs on a Normal Holding

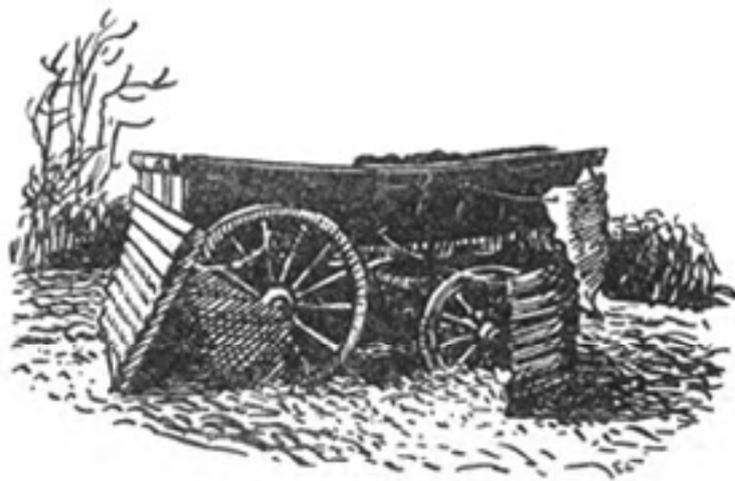
WE must admit, I think, that the pig has one besetting sin: complacency; and this can be, and often is, quite maddening. He knows what he likes, he knows where he would like to sleep and he is particularly partial to what one would call a family walk. On these occasions he finds a convenient fence-hole at about five or six o'clock on a Saturday or Sunday evenings and he and his cronies set off exactly in the spirit of a clique of boys. Provided they have been reasonably fed they will do little damage: rooting up potatoes and eating them is too much like hard work. They may nibble the leaves off mangold and fodder beet if they are young and succulent, but they will not go into standing corn, not on the first escape at any rate: they are afraid of losing themselves. They will pay great attention to banks and hedges as the pig is rather akin to the badger in his likes and dislikes. If no one reports them they will be at home waiting to be fed in the morning, and unless you find the fence current dead, or spot the hole, you may never realize they have been out at all. However, sooner or later you will hear, and the sooner the better. If you are confident that your pigs are not hungry, often the simplest plan is to leave them to their walk and be out early the next morning to mend the fence. Pigs always like to go home to sleep and they always like to return exactly the way they got out. To try and hunt them home your way is only courting hot tempers and wet shirts. In passing, it is possible to be insured against damage by one's stock when breaking fences. The premium is very reasonable, and it puts one in a delightful position as enraged neighbours are quite unable to bully one. They are paid fairly for the damage, not what they can twist with harsh words from a beginner!

One can understand that this trait of adventuring does not make the pig popular with the various farm departments, and the usual practice is to make one or two fields pig-proof and for the next fifty or hundred years the pig is allowed nowhere else. I remember the pig orchard on my uncle's farm, which was too rank to grow anything but ox-eye daisies and, of course, quantities of cider apples, which upset the pigs and were even in those days of little commercial value. My uncle was in the puritan tradition and was never quite easy in his conscience about cider-making. Nor would he allow it to become, as it was on most farms, the basis of farm co-operation and good fellowship. In those bad old days, if the weather should suddenly become perfect for haymaking on a Sunday, a barrel of cider moved with ceremony into the field solved all labour problems.

Besides the pig orchard, which secured all weaned pigs until they were shut up to fatten, there was a two-acre paddock with a shed in one corner for the dry sows. Under no circumstances

were pigs allowed in any other field of the four-hundred-acre farm. Arable ground was equally sacrosanct – a few acres of one-year ley provided clover hay for the horses and ground on which one lambled the ewes. Ploughing up grass was as reprehensible as cashing the family heirlooms.

My uncle was the acknowledged leader of farming practice and etiquette in the 'nineties, but he had a rival famous for his epigrams, as well as being the terror of the boys of the village. One of his phobias was tidy farming. Whilst his ricks had to be just so, and his wood-pile tidy, he hated a yard without manure heaps, and he knew the value of an old cart or implement as a spare-part replacement supply. Benjamin H– was a shrewd old codger, and he was probably right: 'Tidy farming is a sure way to the bankruptcy court,' he used to say. At any rate it is certain that arable pig farming must aim more at the tidiness of the active-service camp than of the peace-time barracks. That old wagon, for instance, may be wanted one day to house a sow and litter or as a shelter for creep feeding. In any case the pigs will appreciate it as a rubbing centre. Rubbing centres are as important to pigs as hairdressers are for ladies, as is shown by the enthusiasm in finding the right point to rub a certain spot in a certain way. It is certainly a tidier proposition to dose your early grass acreage with artificials, but if a hundred stores are rung with pinch-in rings and moved carefully over the area, houses as well as troughs will make a more lasting job.



That spare wagon

One pedigree Jersey-herd owner who sells Devonshire cream and feeds the skim to his pigs, which is an ideal combination, considers that no ley should be fed by one type of stock only. Nothing but cattle is as bad as just one potato crop after another, in his opinion, and pigs follow the cows around the farm. He feeds whole oats with the concentrates to his cattle. These pass through them whole and the pigs snout for them in the dung and spread it free, thus preventing the coarse patches of so much pasture. Land grazed by horses for too long, as in studs and riding stables, gets tufty and full of docks – and again the pig is the answer.

This is, in fact, where I am striking out on a line completely my own. The manurial residue and cultivation value of a fifteen-sow unit, which means a population of one hundred and twenty to one hundred and forty pigs all the time, is in the neighbourhood of £500 per annum. Sows are splendid scavengers and cultivators, but the stores are the boys to produce the goods. For their own good the stores must be fairly closely penned. A quarter to half an acre for thirty pigs is my rule. In this small area it is essential that they should be on grass so as to

keep as clean and comfortable as possible. The heavy manure dressing that they will give can only be properly used as a preparation for roots or grazing. By all means put them on stubble, perhaps carrying some ryegrass, and prepare for a bumper root crop without any other dressing. But if you have yard or cow-stall manure, then I should let your sows, and sows and litters, prepare the root break and put your manure on in addition. Pigs have rather an affinity for horse or cow manure, and it can be put out before the pigs go on the ground, if that suits your book. If you can manage this you can then concentrate your store pigs on your pastures.

In January and February put your stores, carefully rung as I have said, on the fields scheduled for early grass. It depends on the size of the pigs, of course, but in regard to number I should run three or four pigs for every cow in your dairy herd that will be there in the spring. It is a good plan to build a hurdle race, as I have described elsewhere, not only for drafting pigs for sale, but also for catching and re-ringing any rooting offender. If you want your pastures to be well done you must expect to give your pig-man help at this time, just as the shepherd is helped out at lambing. All houses should be moved at least fortnightly, troughs usually daily. After the early pastures come the dud pastures that, under normal farming practice, would be ploughed and reseeded. I do not wish to be dogmatic, but I believe you will find that a bunch of stores – fifty pigs per acre per month, unrung this time, please – will save you the cost of ploughing and cultivation and probably half the cost of seed. If there is a possible lime deficiency I should advise liming in February before the pigs take possession, and when the growing weather comes, in March and early April, I should act on my observations. I expect you will find that where the pigs have grazed rather than rooted there is good grass. I should put the harrows or chain harrows over the whole field and reseed the rooted portion as you or you and your seedsman think wise.

By this time your stores can go back to the early pastures. Much has been written on the technique of modern grassland management, strip grazing, never allowing grass to get tough, and the like. I am inclined to think that the only party that has not been consulted is the grass, and that the grass is not at all happy. Especially is this so if the grazing is by an outstanding dairy herd. When the grass is at its most succulent it is probably at its weakest. Young people or young animals at their pre-maturity stage are notoriously 'brittle', especially if they have been forced, and this grass has been forced. All that is returned to the soil is what the cow can spare when she has manufactured a hundredweight of milk and kept her body and soul together. Is it surprising that these leys are not yielding or recovering after grazing as they should? The pasture has no bottom. It has an unhealthy yellow tinge when the cows leave it, set off by almost ominous dark patches where there has been a small concentration of dung. The old 'uns used to say: 'To make a pasture breaks a man', and it seems unlikely that a seeds mixture and the manure bag have altered this completely. On the other hand, I believe the pig with his rich and abundant manure is the right partner for the dairy cow. The partnership is the happier by the fact that cows graze with enthusiasm after the pigs. Finally, there is nothing that promotes clover and bottom to pasture like the pig.

For a simple, satisfying job, give me the care of in-pig sows. They can and will find a lot of their own keep for six months of the year. They will lie happily on a heap of straw with no roof over their heads, and their fencing is simple. So far as feeding is concerned, if there are potatoes either for the finding or tipped raw in a heap, or fodder-beet tops, the sows can be trusted to take their ration without making pigs of themselves, provided – and this is an important provision – they have a dry feeder containing meat and bone-meal or some other meat or fish-meal preparation. I put meat and bone-meal first because pigs will seldom take

more than the requirements of their health and that of the family inside, but fish-meal might eat rather a hole in your pocket. One point to guard against in meat and bone-meal is that it should not be too salt, and if possible avoid m & b from a bacon factory. Fed in this way, sows are active, litters are strong, and the sow enjoys her cereal ration which she gets when suckling. I am inclined to think that fodder beet is better rationed as the sows would get too fat if fed *ad lib*. Dry sows will make a capital job of swedes or kale, and again, in this case, a dry feeder with meat and bone-meal is all the outside help they need.

One more point: sows fed on an abundance of roots require no water to drink, but in a hot August, when clearing potatoes, they like a mud bath.

It sometimes happens that a sow farrows unexpectedly when running with the dry sows, and it is neither convenient nor wise to move her for a few days. It is certainly unfair to expect her to rustle for potatoes, and the problem is how to feed her by herself. It is a good plan to run a double live wire around her with an opening a yard wide at one corner. Feed her and give her a drink at the furthest corner from the opening. The dry sows will all gather around this end, envying her and daring one another to gate-crash, but they will not think of walking around and looking for an opening. The mother when she has finished her meal will walk around methodically until she finds an opening. Care must be taken that the other sows do not follow the mother into the feeding pen. If they do this the position of the opening must be changed. In fencing large fields, especially for sows and litters, it is often unnecessary to fence the whole perimeter of the field. The entrance gate and the entrance side and corners should have close attention. Other gates or gaps should be ostentatiously blocked, but the electric fencing may wait until the sows err.

Sows and litters are a kind of half-way house between dry sows and stores. They are particularly suitable for stubbling, because for the first fourteen days they will wander very little, and the grain on the ground is tempting even for piglings. For such a job old wagons drawn up in the shelter of a hedge – and be sure that it shelters from the S.W. – are invaluable. The house and the rubbing post are combined, sows prefer them to any other sort of hut. Apart from stubbling, do not let your sows have too much roaming room in their paddock. Piglings should not be expected or encouraged to be out in the rain long, and if they are caught by a storm at the far end of a four-acre paddock it is a long way home. I should expect to find sows and litters in the winter on the root break, either stubble or a ley due to be ploughed. On these one may be fairly sure of dry lying and also there is less moving about than the stores are subjected to. Piglings are like children, they hate moving house.

One last point about water. I used to think that water-hauling was to be reduced to a minimum and planning that would avoid water-hauling was bound to be good. However, I think the facts are these. In hot weather if pigs have insufficient water, both to drink and to play with, they will break fences and look for it. In hot weather, then, it is paramount. In normal weather small pigs will drink far more than you expect – a gallon twice daily is not too high an estimate. Once the water is loaded it takes little time to get it to the pigs. I find that fifty-gallon oil drums, with one end cut out and used as a movable top, lined with old bags, are admirable, and a good measure to ensure how much water you are leaving at each pen. The problem is to get those drums filled. It is your problem, but away down at the bottom of the list of possibilities is a pond and a bucket to dip out with.



You Like Pigs?

OF COURSE you like pigs if you have waded all through this book. You will have done so either because you will be trying to catch me out, or because you have captured my enthusiasm. I am by nature obstinate and haphazard: more kindly, these failings may be termed tenacity and a love of adventure. If I had followed other people's advice I should have conformed to the accepted rules of farming, or climbed out on the bank with my finances unimpaired years ago. Instead, I have kept my nose to the grindstone so that often I have been unable to see money slipping away to right and left, but what I have learnt about pigs has been drilled into me mostly in mud and wind and rain, and I have proved it true. True in the main principle that the pig is naturally healthy, wise and thrifty, give him his chance!

Personally, I have an inherent mistrust of costings. It is stated, for example, that the Danes can produce bacon far cheaper than we can, but who exactly are 'we'? Is it perhaps that a few leading farmers who have long been producing pigs by the thousand have forgotten the word economy and know, incidentally, that it is unwise to appear prosperous? It seems to me to be reasonable to argue that if one's housing costs are reduced from £10 per pig to 10s. [£0.5], and if the manure instead of being a liability for infection becomes a priceless asset, one may expect to be producing pig-meat profitably when others are gasping.

At any rate, let us have a little play with figures. One must start somewhere, and I suggest a reasonable depreciation charge to place on a sow per litter is £1. Her food for 112 days at 1s. per day will be £5 12s., or in rough figures the cost of a new-born pigling is £1 3s. Cost of food for the suckling sow at 3d. per lb. (she is only rearing six pigs, so 6 lb. is sufficient); 1s. 6d. per day for eight weeks is £4 4s., or 14s. per pigling; add 14 lb. for creep feeding, 3s. 6d., making 17s. 6d. in all. Cut out the sixpence, which is a nuisance, and add that to the £1 3s., and the cost of an eight-weeks-old pig in food alone is £2. It may be argued that 3d. a lb. is too low, but barley meal costs considerably less, and the high-protein supplement, even if fed as I suggest, *ad lib*, will not bring the cost appreciably above 3d. per lb.

	£	s.	d.
Cost of weaned pig is	2	0	0
4 weeks at 2-1/2lb. per day at 3d. per lb.		17	6
4 weeks at 3-1/2lb. per day at 3d. per lb.	1	4	6
4 weeks at 4-1/2lb. per day at 3d. per lb.	1	11	6
8 weeks at 5lb. per day at 3d. per lb.	3	10	0
Cost of pig at 7 months old, in food	9	3	6
Add 7 bales of straw at 2s. 6d.		17	6

Seven bales of straw works out at a bale of straw nearly every day for a family of twenty-eight pigs. That is to say, the present cost of a seven-months' pig in feeding-stuffs is a shade off £10. Your capital equipment, such as I have outlined, would not be more than £500,

depreciation at 10 per cent, say 10s. per pig. There remains your labour cost – your own labour. It was an old-established costing practice to put the cost of labour against the value of the manure, but in this case the manure is the most valuable known to man, quite double that of cattle manure, and at least one-third of the labour time will be spent not in tending the pigs, but in improving the capital value of the holding: making houses or pig troughs (strong wooden troughs will be found serviceable and the pig will not gnaw them to pieces).

These figures, like all figures, are going to vary, and get me into trouble with people who know differently and have not kept pigs this way. By keeping his pigs rooting and grunting and growing, instead of clocking up interest on loans and depreciation in expensive buildings and gadgets, the pioneer pig keeper is going to make money for himself, whatever happens to markets, especially if he has an eye on them and buys weaners when they are cheap. He has no worry as to where he can put them, he can knock up a house and pen in a couple of hours. His overheads are low, his pig vitality is high, and with the unseen bonus of capital gain on reclaimed land, he is on an easy wicket, provided his management is sound – that is the big proviso.

You young enthusiasts teeming out of the agricultural colleges with a great big longing to farm: this may sound good to you, and it can be good for you, provided you have the guts. If you have, there are probably a handful of industries who would buy you with good money, comfort and ease, and you will indeed be exceptional if you still desire to make your own farm. Are you weatherproof? Do you instinctively agree with everyone who growls about the weather? If you do, put pig pioneering out of your mind.

To be a successful pig pioneer you must either laugh at the weather, even at its vilest – because in spite of it your pigs are warm and comfortable – or else you must smile with it because it is not raining or freezing, and you can get on with the work. Then you must have horse sense. Take any farm periodical and observe what you are recommended to buy for your pigs and what it would cost you. Be very interested in foods and medicines, be suspicious of everyone who offers you profits from buying something – it is what you do not buy that counts. The golden rule is ask the pig. Usually you will find that the pig prefers the home-made and the home-grown to the factory product. If he does not, it will be economical to improve your home production. Lastly, you must be chore-minded. On the whole, you must prefer messing about with the car or breaking a colt or making a chicken house to going to the flicks, sipping beer or attending a lecture. Mind you, I am all for fun occasionally, and pigs are certainly less punctilious in their demands than dairy cattle. No doubt you have attended youth rallies, pony club do's, and the like. Have you ever been to a steeplechase meeting? Saturday afternoon show jumping simply won't do in this pig pioneering racket. It is a steeplechase in which you sweep on, taking your jumps as they come, and your reward at the end is to find yourself ten years younger in mind and physique than your contemporaries clothed in gloves and overcoats.

On the whole, I think the most likely people to find success are ex-service men in their forties and early fifties. Especially if they have been grounded in the tradition that the comfort of the troops comes first. I find youth, in this scientific age, on the whole, shockingly flabby. I base this observation on their behaviour with the electric fence. In the old days, when public-school tradition demanded that the day started with cold baths, at any rate for the fags, it might have been easier to persuade a lad to 'take the plunge' of testing the fence. Now the bulk of them do it once or twice and after that they lie about it, but they look so sheepish I

seldom have the heart to bring them to book. Older men are tougher, and – I say it in all seriousness – if you are not prepared to get the same satisfaction from a hot fence that you might expect from a cold bath, don't experiment in pioneering with pigs.



More exciting than picking locks

I have laid it down in an earlier chapter that this is not the kind of show for big finance, and in the main that is true. I can think of no surer road to the bankruptcy court than trying to reclaim a thousand acres with three hundred sows and a staff of fifteen or twenty. But there is an alternative: that big business should start a chain of small pig projects on a derelict estate, taking their profit mainly from the value of the land reclamation and providing capital on generous terms to the various projects. In this way the risk of disease would be minimized and a wastrel would soon be spotted and moved before he had lost much money, whilst the value of companionship and mutual help would be great. Personally, I believe that the man with sufficient capital to start on his own would be well advised to have in his mind as a goal a fifty-acre holding growing good grass equipped with a house, a garage, and a shed or two.

This is exactly what a great many people are looking for in the Home Counties, and as there are so few farms of this size it has a scarcity value and no lack of buyers. The cash difference between the original cost of waste land and the sale price is going to vary, but it is going to be enough to give you a good start on the land where you want to go. The cost of the new land should bear a close relation to your sale price.

The reward you get for hard work and living like a pioneer with your pigs depends on a number of considerations, all of which need to be considered in choosing your site. Electricity, water mains, sewage mains, all in the road, put up land values. Get your land cheap because it is derelict woodland, but with these facilities, and it is worth money even without a house on it. As soon as you get a house on your land, up goes the value with a bound. The wise man would see an architect and get his plans passed before he saw a tractor salesman, for the house puts up the value of the whole fifty acres. As we saw earlier, £10 per acre and a two-roomed shack, add £1,500 worth of a house, via building society mortgage, and the whole area becomes a farm selling at the current price. Let the next man lash out into pig palaces and milking parlours; take your reward in having carved good land for England out of a wilderness. Take your time and think ahead; put a two-room shack on it yourself, and it limits the market, so don't go in for the makeshift. You will be surprised how easily you can get a house started up, when you can count on selling to clear the debt. Of course, you may get so attached to your holding that fifty acres will become a hundred, and a hundred three hundred, and the pigs will save your artificial bill, and you will own one of the cleanest and most fertile farms of the neighbourhood.

How, then, do you cash the increased value as capital gain: for example, to build yourself up a dairy herd? Go and see the bank manager who by now should be an old friend. Either you can raise a mortgage on the land, if you have not piled too much on already, which with hard work and spending little you should not, or you might sell to someone for an investment and become a tenant farmer with all the protection of the law which prevented you from taking a tenancy in the first place. The universities who never have to pay death duties are sometimes willing to become landlords.

Let us give the banks, our banks, our country banks, good advice. It will be a nice change. Have you got one or two farms whose mortgages you hold? The farmers are under-capitalized and rather dumb or lazy and the farms are going downhill. Cannot you find from the agricultural colleges or the retired officer association a candidate or two for pig pioneering? Could you not cover his feeding-stuffs bill until he begins to sell pigs? It would pay you, and the value of the land would increase out of all knowledge – virtually your land!

When my father went to the Falkland Isles back in 1870 there were still to be found wild-pig descendants of pigs imported by the Spaniards a hundred and fifty years before. These pigs had existed on these windy, wet and unsuitable isles mainly on sheep carcasses. They used to make themselves huge heaps of tussocky grass as shelters. The Spaniards were no fools, where colonization was concerned, and one wonders whether our own Colonial Office would not find it more effective, and far cheaper, to let pigs sometimes prospect and prescribe instead of sending out royal commissions. Africa is a case in point, beset as it is by problems such as locusts and tsetse fly. It is usually the case that at some particular stage in their development these scourges are easily destroyed by birds or some other animal. I would like to see attached to agricultural institutes and mission schools teams of natives with their packs of thirty or forty pigs distributed in different environments just watching what they ate, and what they enjoyed, and reporting. This would be science and not profit-making, and I should not expect the pigs to subsist on just what they picked up, but I cannot see why we should assume that only Africans who can attain distinction educationally are worth noting or trying to work with when we know among our own people there is a wisdom quite distinct from book learning.

Russia, China and India are all countries with ill-fed, rapidly increasing masses, where the promotion of the pig might play as important a part as the introduction of the potato did in the West four hundred years ago. It is true that the pig inclines to compete with the human in the consumption of cereals, but the jungles might well provide other things besides fruit, upon which the pig would thrive. Russia with its pioneer spirit, demonstrated in the lead given in artificial insemination, is most likely to give the lead here.

However, we are not going pig farming in Russia or Africa, but in England, and it is well to note that all prices drop the farther we get from London. As I said before, cattle at Reading usually sell better than cattle at Yeovil, and at Yeovil we usually make higher prices than at Exeter. Therefore, you will be well advised to start your farms in the Home Counties. Sell your pigs as well as you can, when you can, but all the time remember: failure, if it comes, will come from your incompetence and not from price debacles. The ball is yours!



The man is mad, you see

