

MEMORIES: Mangles were a standard feature of homes in the days before the spin cycles of washing machines



That's a quare day for dryin' blankets

OUR recent spell of brilliant weather brought back a childhood memory of a phrase that threw our household into chaos. 'That's a quare day for dryin' blankets.'

And so the marathon would begin. Beds stripped, a pale mound of Whitney wool blankets rose, blocking access to the front door.

In a scullery the size of a witness box and dim with condensation, the sink brimmed with foot-deep soapsuds generated by copious amounts of 'miraculous Tide'.

Jostling for position were my mother and Auntie Mollie in crossover pinnies, perspiring freely, their hair awry – and me on mangle duty, but mostly just getting in the way. Whatahandlin'.

Thus began the grimly repetitive pummelling, rinsing, wringing – the floor awash.

Then four-folding each blanket lengthwise and feeding it evenly through the tight wooden lips of the mangle – to the detriment of my shoulder muscles as I cranked the handle.

Thence, bearing each blanket aloft to the sunny backyard for the big shake-out, heave and fling over the clothes-line. "Don't let it trail on the ground."

Back inside to the smell of hot wet wool and do it all again, until the lines are full and creaking at their moorings and I have developed incipient biceps.

Pandemonium broke out should the weather 'turn', but we had a 10-foot-long, four-barred pulley line in the kitchen for insurance. Though ducking under banners of damp blankets was a temporary inconvenience, all was not entirely lost.

These days, as I wrestle feebly with the logistics of a king size duvet, its cover and accessories, I wonder how women sustained the relentless and gruelling effort necessary to keep

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abreast of the endless obligations of good housekeeping without the appliances, facilities and products so abundant today.

The under-the-stairs 'glory hole' of my childhood contained Parazone, Vim, the aforementioned Tide detergent, Sunlight and Lifebuoy soaps, Brasso, Silvo, Mansion polish, a dry mop, a 'wet' mop, scrubbing brushes, a stiff-bristled broom, a softer one and a carpet sweeper.

I have two entire cupboards full of cleaning products – plus a cleaning lady who brings her own.

When I was about four we got a Goblin vacuum cleaner with a roar like a jet engine. I was terrified of it (a healthy mindset I've successfully applied to every similar appliance since, particularly the too-heavy toad-like multifunctional one bought by the Loving Spouse let out unsupervised).

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Mother's washing machine came later, but merely made blanket laundering a more frequent exercise.

That original pulley line, already enjoying heirloom status, moved with my parents from their first and second home to the home where I was born.

I took it with me from my first to second married home where it was duly installed in a double garage that never had room for a car in it because I married a pathological hoarder of things that might be useful one day.

Perpetually festooned in wet washing, it's given sterling service to three generations and I've spent a lifetime having my arms wrenched from their sockets as I haul a load of king size bedding aloft.

Auntie Mollie long outlived my mother and made it abundantly clear when she came to stay that she couldn't be doing with "them doovey things".

Luckily (on the 'might be useful one day' principle) we'd kept the wool blankets, candlewick bedspreads, the slippery satin eiderdown – and the pulley line.

Today, all we do is sort lights from darks from delicates and push a button to wash, rinse and spin.

Tumble dryers are temperamental beasts. I had two in quick succession and though it was comforting to have pre-warmed

underwear on a winter's morning and box-fresh garments ready to wear, they were environmentally unfriendly and dear to run.

By the way, did I mention the conservatory in which, rather than pot plants, I've cultivated a fine crop of clothes racks? Even on a dull day, a couple of hours will dry anything creaselessly.

"Does she never iron?" I hear you wonder. Iron? I haven't ironed since I lost the Loving Spouse, who I sent out daily, impeccably pressed. These days my only iron is in my soul...

ON THIS DAY

AUGUST 3 1921

Judge on Lisburn Riots

MR JUSTICE Samuels delivered judgement yesterday on the question of the area of charge for the damage arising out of the sacking and burning of Catholic property in Lisburn.

The town was the scene of serious rioting on the 24th and 25th July 1920. The riot was unquestionably connected with the murder of Brigadier-General Smyth, Divisional Commissioner in Munster, at Cork on 17th July [1920] and his funeral at Banbridge, his native place, on 24th July when the riots began. On Sunday, 22nd August District Inspector Swanzy, R.I.C., who had been transferred from Cork, was assassinated when leaving church after morning service.

Very shortly after the assassination, bands of men, infuriated by indignation, set fire to several shops and houses in the town and arson, looting and wild destruction of property and goods went on day and night continuously for three days. A total number of 278 houses or other premises were burned and immense destruction was caused to furniture, goods and merchandise. The losses inflicted on the sufferers had been appalling.

In assessing the area to be levied for compensation, the Judge said he thought it almost certain that the rioters in Lisburn were assisted by people of the country districts. He had no doubt that the originators were residents in Lisburn and that when the flames and smoke ascended from the burning buildings people crowded into the town and, intent on reeking vengeance on those whom they regarded as political and sectarian antagonists, joined the mob of incendiaries.

'IRA' Twist in Tyrone Barrack Tragedy

A DISTRESSING tragedy in which Special Constable Michael Waters (20), a native of County Leitrim, lost his life in Dromore Police Barracks, County Tyrone on Saturday formed the subject of an inquest at Dromore.

Sergeant Walsh, Dromore said that on the night in question he found Constable Waters's dead body lying on the floor. A service rifle was lying across the body and there was a large pool of blood. Witness sent for Dr Hamilton and Fr McDermott. Witness knew the deceased's handwriting and identified a letter which was addressed to Sergeant Walsh as follows: "... I plainly see there is no fair play in this country now. Force will rule the day." On the back of the letter was written: "I am a soldier of the IRA and I die the same." Sergeant Walsh said the deceased was a very sober young man. The jury found that the deceased died from a bullet wound, self-inflicted. **THE so-called 'Lisburn Pogrom' of 1920 following the IRA assassination of DI Swanzy eliminated every Catholic business, costing £220,000 in compensation.**

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