



Summer show gives a real-life education

Michael Moynihan

The **Cork Summer Show**, which has brought city mice and country mice together since the early 19th century, remains an unmissable treat.

No revelation to its regular attendees but for this agnostic, who had not been at the event for a few years, it was a restorative visit last weekend.

I had consulted the two unofficial research assistants in my household about accompanying me, but one was planning a lie-in and passed. The other agreed to come as long as she was back in time for the CMAT concert that same evening in Musgrave Park.

I patiently explained that Curraheen is not Ballybofey or Loughgiel, adding that a trip to take in vintage farm machinery and such might in fact be ideal preparation for the Dunboyne Diana.

Off we went.

First things first: Accessing the event was a smoothly efficient experience. There's a tortured pun to be unearthed somewhere involving the vintage farm machinery and the show's slick delivery mechanism, landing people on site from Curraheen Park, MTU, and the Black Ash Park and Ride, a quick scan at the main entrance, and into the site itself.

My research assistant, ever alert to a bargain, identified possibilities in the O'Neill's sportswear tent not far from our entry point, and she was right.

The long queue of customers was a good omen, and we picked up a €10 rain jacket before we pressed on for the real

stuff: The animals.

During the week, I noted a key point made by the show's Catherine O'Mahony: City dwellers can read

about food production, but meeting farmers and seeing animals, equipment, and techniques up close makes that knowledge real.

This point was underlined by our stroll around the cattle ring on the western edge of the grounds, and being brought up against the reality of the bovine form in all its infinite variety.

The array of cattle and calves of all kinds being washed, groomed, walked, fed, led, turned, and reversed was a quick education in diversity.

However, at the far end of the ring, directly across from the show-jumping arena, was an entirely different sight: The biggest cow I have ever seen.

My research assistant and I both caught sight of it at the same time, a vast white presence — so broad! — which towered over nearby animals and the woman rubbing its back.

The cow looked magnificently bored with the proceedings, not deigning to look around too much, resigned to putting up with the rigmarole until it was time to go home.

While we took in the sight of an animal which seemed about 25% larger than the next biggest cow on site, we noticed a curious phenomenon.

As people walked down the line of cows, they all paused once they came to the great white cow. It was a little

gratifying to see even those visitors dressed as though farms were their natural habitats come to a stop, take off their sunglasses, and nudge their wives or husbands if they hadn't already seen the cow.

If the sight was stopping them in their tracks — literally — we didn't feel too self-conscious about our own surprise. From there, we went to the trade stalls and tents running parallel to the main road. Here, we encountered the terrific Guide Dogs for the Blind stand and weighed the comparative merits of the political parties' stalls.

Fianna Fáil had an enticing array of lollipops to entice visitors, while Sinn Féin didn't appear to have any such offering, but the Labour Party had both bananas and Tangfastics (I leave our pol corrs to extrapolate from my field work).

Before we left, we visited a group of squealing piglets melting the heart of every child crowded around their enclosure and driving every adult present to consider, however briefly, the economics of raising an impossibly cute mammal at home.

Well, this adult, at least. On the way home, I asked my research assistant for her highlight. The huge cow won hands down, hence the addition to the family Google calendar: June 2027, Aura Cow Return.

The **Cork Summer Show**: Undefeated.



The Hackett and O'Driscoll girls enjoy a day out at the **Cork Summer Show**.
Picture: Chani Anderson



Tori O'Connell, Martin Kelly, Jack Kelly, and Albert De Cogan, with the reserve supreme champion and supreme champion.



Emilyrose McFadden, Swords, enjoying the entertainment at the show.

Pictures: Michael O'Sullivan/OSM



Cloyne natives Lisa O'Brien, Sean McSweeney, and Emily O'Brien pose with a wheelbarrow of onions.

Picture: Chani Anderson



Daithí and Nollaig Feehan, Mallow, with Michelle and Nora Healy, Bishopstown.

Picture: Michael O'Sullivan/OSM Photo

