

Port Welshpool & District Maritime Museum

Article: 10/2025

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Water

Our everyday lives are filled with the reliance on water. So much is used in the process of what we eat, store and drink. We go about life without a second thought for the amount we use, unless you're a farmer or live in an area where you have to buy water for your everyday life. Bores are always a good help but they are not always obtainable or household friendly for every aspect of the home.

Back in the day, some will remember when the mains wasn't connected to residential houses. Mother Nature was what we relied on. The tank was our storage system. This had to be nursed through the year on every aspect of household living. "Turn the tap off," was the cry from a parent to a child as the water was needlessly running away? It was always a worry when little or no rain had fallen and the tank was getting very low. We bathed once a week and mainly on Sunday nights. All to be clean for the coming week. The hot water system was the copper; which was to be lit and when the water was at a near boiling temperature the water was then bucketed to the bath. Because of the danger of scalding, parents usually saw to this task or the eldest child had the responsibility. Mum and Dad were usually the first in to enjoy the pleasure of clean hot water. Then a top up of some hot water and the kids had their turn to have a good scrub and "don't forget to wash behind your ears" mum reminded everyone. Depending on how many kids were in the family as to how this went, girls first then boys? But usually the water was rather brown to say the least when the plug was pulled.



In between the Sunday bath you made sure you had a good wash for each day. The lighting of the copper was also the procedure to do the washing, mainly cotton clothes; synthetics like wool or delicates were all hand washed.

As we compare to today a lot has changed: Now it's the norm to start the day with a nice hot shower, not only to wake you up but a great way to start the day. If your hot and sticky, or cold and wet a shower is always the answer. Men coming home after a hard day's work behind them; a nice hot shower is the answer to a relaxing evening before sitting down to dinner. We just turn the tap on for whatever reason and don't give it a second thought. Until maybe the authorities say our dams are getting low. But even then, do we really take notice, could be when the water bill arrives we give it a thought but then there is always those extra charges, parks and fire! Adding to the total.

As we remember back, it's a bit hard to fathom how we did survive but of course we didn't know any different. Imagine today, turning the tap on and a wriggler appearing in the glass but back then, it was no surprise.

Gardens totally were reliant on the rain for water as the tank water was so precious for our everyday living. For a while there, the tank was encouraged for every modern day new build but it's too easy to just turn the tap from the mains and life's too busy to worry about the tank levels. Not to mention all those "modern day appliances" we now have that rely on water. Flushing toilets: rather than the dunny up the back yard. The dishwasher: when the kids argued over whose turn it was to wash, now it's the unpacking. Monday was washing day which had Mum spending all day slaving away in the laundry. Just to mention a few.

(Photos courtesy of the internet)