

[Page 37 - Farmer John Eyking: The Holland Years](#)ISSUE : [Issue 50](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1989/1/1

right thing, but just I said to these people, "Sixty years ago, we lived like that, the same way. " For instance, if I would (want to) have an acre of land ready in the fall, we would (have to) bring up the virgin soil out of the depth. Would you be interested in how we'd do that? (Yes.) Say this is the field. Now first of all, Holland is actually a delta from the 2 or 3 big rivers. It is a delta--it's the silt from the rivers. As a matter of fact, Napoleon once said--he claimed Holland--he said. "You're only like the silt from my river, anyway." So on the coastline it was ideal soil for bulbs. It used to be 60 feet of sand. But the top foot or so would be fertile by humus over the years--plants grow. For bulbs, they learned over the years, by intensive growing, every once in awhile you (have to) bring new soil up. We used to call it spitten, which means digging. Anyway, you would have this field. And say this was an acre of field. And this sand, now, something like a beach, but a little different type of sand because it came from the rivers. So we would cut strips. The strips would be about so wide--6 feet, I think it was. We worked by foot. Although we have a metric system, in agriculture we work by foot. Isn't that strange? I think it has something to do with the English exporting business. Anyway, we dig this hole out. Okay, I take one foot of soil, lay it down there. I clean this off. Now I have a hole that deep (one foot deep). And I take the second one and lay it out there. (That's two feet deep.) Two. So it becomes a pile bigger. Then I take the third one and put it on top. Now mind you, some soil, the third one would be already white soil, we call it-- virgin soil. Depends how old the land was. So now I'm standing in this hole, right? I'm in this hole. So now I take the (next over) second foot and the third foot--now I'm standing in this (next) hole. And so I go along. Up and down this field, all winter. And in the end, by March or April, I come (back) there (where he began), and fill the (first) hole. A zigzag. And there's one strip left in the end. It's intriguing. If you ever tell people that, (they'll) think you're kind of a beast of burden. You get blisters on your hands and you wear out 2 shovels or 3 shovels a winter. And if it was a cold morning you would have the axe to take that first layer of frost. Although the winter was never that tough. John Eyking in the Dutch army. But you know, I never felt like a beast of burden. I was proud. Say the norm was 25 holes a day. And I'd come home, I'd say, "Gee, I did 27." And you know, you'd be leaving before daylight, because days were short anyway. And all you would have with you, would have a piece of paper with 5 big sandwiches, that thick. Oh, there'd be a little bit of sugar, and a bit of--there was no such a thing as a lot of meat or cheese. And a bottle of cold tea. (What would be in that sandwich?) The sandwich would have--maybe one with cheese, maybe Mother would scrape a little bit of pigfat or something on it, because you couldn't afford butter, and then there'd be sugar on it, another one. And good and thick. 88/89 SEASON Keltic Lodge Nova Scotia Celtic Cape Smokey Book Now. Ski Later. For information and/or reservations write: Keltic Lodge, P.O. Box 70 Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia B0C 1L0, or call: 1-285-2880 Ski by the Sea.