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Cowshed Cinderella



A farmers' daughter from Carmarthenshire, West Wales dubbed the "Cowshed Cinderella" has won £1,300,000 from her parents for her 30 years of work and the loss of her young days of freedom.

The High Court in Cardiff was told that Eirian Davies, 45, missed out going to dances to look after the cows on the family dairy farm while her sisters partied. Hard-working Eirian was assured by her parents Tegwyn and Mary that "you will have the damn lot one day". Eirian gave her life to the farm in the belief that her patience and hard work would be rewarded and that she would take over the thriving farm and its pedigree milking herd when her parents retired.

Until she reached 21 she worked for nothing. After that she often received as little as £15 a day for milking the cows. If she complained about her treatment, her father told her "not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg".

Both her sisters Enfys and Eleri left home to pursue other careers and for the past 20 years Eirian was alone on the farm with her parents. Eirian was shown a copy of a Will in 2009 which left nearly all the farm to her. Relations with her parents deteriorated when she formed male friendships. A family fight broke out and the parents began proceedings to evict Eirian.

Eirian launched a legal battle for her 'rightful share'. The Appeal Court found that she had relied to her detriment on her parents' promises and thrown herself into working on the farm. She was thus entitled to a "beneficial interest" in the business in order to reflect her "suffering" and the promises made to her.

It was ruled that the farm was worth about £3,800,000 and that an "appropriate award" for Eirian would be £1,300,000 for her to start a farm of her own.

The legal way of preventing this problem would have been to put in place a properly drafted Partnership Agreement to protect the respective interests of the different parties. This advice would apply to any family business.

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If you require advice on this matter please contact Miranda on 01328 710210. If you require advice on any other legal matter please telephone our Wells office on 01328 710210 or email law@hayes-storr.com.

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