

Barn Dance 2001

Two quotes say most of what has to be said:-

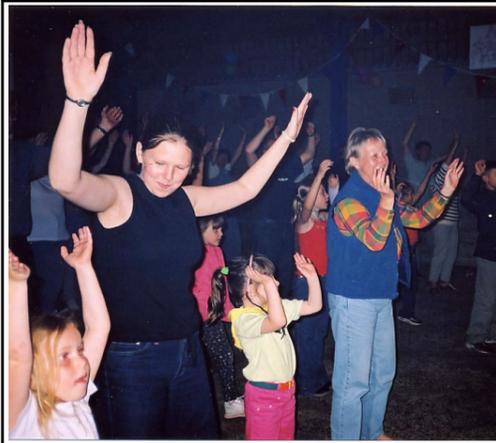
"It must have been a good night – I finished up in hospital" - Andy

"A quick message to say that we all enjoyed being part of the party last night. Thanks for inviting us, and thanks for spoiling us too, drinks and food were very kind. My dancing partner, Elaine, has recently been dancing regularly with me but said that last night's Barn Dance was the best one she has ever been to for venue, and atmosphere. Stephen Woodcock

This year's piece of Farmers Potted Philosophy.

(Noted as another rear light lens bit the dust during the complicated maneuver known as "just back the trailer in here")

Any bit of reversing that ends without a crash or a tinkle is a good bit of reversing.



Stalag Knowle

I don't know what it was about this year, but we had the most dreadful difficulty keeping the lambs in all summer. They were out everywhere all the time. It wasn't just us either, other farming friends and colleagues reported the same thing.

Fortunately we get on well with all our neighbours, but there wasn't a neighbour's field that we didn't have sheep in several

times during the summer. It was actually quite a break to hand the reigns over to my cousins in the summer as we went away for two weeks and they stayed here.

We returned to tales of blocked escape routes, scrapes and cuts, the dreaded early morning phone calls and door bells ("there are some sheep on the road"), much fencing, and general trials and tribulations, but still the little b****s were getting into neighbours fields!

Later on, Liz and I returned from another few days away to a series of messages on the

answering machine that started with "Hello Terry and Liz, your next door neighbour here. I am afraid there are a couple of your sheep in my field again", and finished on day four with "Those bl****y sheep are here again!!"

Ah.... the joys of farming.



Owls of Delight

Last Christmas Terry bought me a weekend at the English Falconry Centre as a present, but good old foot and mouth meant I couldn't go until October. The centre is in Shuttleworth Hall in Bedfordshire and we took the caravan down for the weekend so Terry could relax while I was enjoying myself. On the Saturday, I did the Activity Day which meant basically following a falconer around for the day.

There was only me and one other person that day and we started just looking at the various birds, then we progressed to holding them in a gloved hand, then we walked around the site holding a Harris hawk to make sure we were doing it right and the bird wasn't distressed. They are quite beautiful and not at all frightening although I was grateful for the glove!

We took part in

training a young eagle called Missus, and then we progressed to flying two barn owls (Dusk and Dawn), a snowy owl (Bede), a Chilean Eagle, a Saker Hawk, and we went for a walk with several vultures. We actually took two of the Harris hawks out into the woods and flew them, and the day ended with us helping to feed some of the birds, including a vulture named Percy.

It was a fantastic present and I loved every minute of it. The birds are so majestic. Owls, despite their reputation are actually not very bright, in fact the cleverest birds there are the vultures – which is how one managed to escape recently, took up residence in the local vicar's garden and got his name on the news.



The second day it poured with rain and so my day out in the wilds with a Harris hawk has had to be postponed as the birds don't fly in the

Christmas 2001

A date for the Diary.

August Bank Holiday Weekend (24th to 26th August) is the date of the 2002

Knowle Farm Barbeque and Barn Dance.

Book your accommodation

Foot and Mouth

Not a good year for farming. And a hard year at Knowle Farm. It started last winter when Andy and I had about 850 lambs out on keep (staying with friends is the non-farming term). Farmers with cows and other animals often like to have sheep on the fields over the winter as they will eat all the grass flat, and leave the field ready to start growing again in the spring.

Last December, we moved them out to a field that should have lasted them for two or three weeks, but it rained so much that they had trampled the lot flat in as many days. This meant going to the next field, setting up an electric fence round the perimeter, collecting 850 lambs (have you ever tried that? With or without a dog?) moving them to the new field, and finally winding up the electric fence in the old field. It is usually about a day's work. Only to have the same thing happen two days later.

It simply would not stop raining, and they trampled everything we put them on. Andy and I got very adept at erecting and

The Knowle Farm Colour Supplement

Volvo In Formula One



You are on your motor cycle on the Nurburgring race track, flat out, as fast you can go. What is the least likely

thing to pass you? Yes - a Volvo estate with three wrinklies in it. Fortunately I never actually did pass any

motor bikes, so no heart attacks there, but my trip round the well known German Grand Prix track was one of the high points of our summer holiday in Germany. The Volvo acquitted itself extremely well, we passed an awful lot of things, and the most surprising thing to overtake me was a Range Rover that just stormed past, I couldn't get near him. And I have to agree with the racing fraternity, automatic gearboxes are great for traffic, but a manual is probably better on a racetrack.

Lambing Report 2001

There were some interesting highlights to the farming year, and lambing, as always, had it's pleasures. Liz's orphanage grew to it's usual size, many normal, healthy lambs who, for many reasons, found themselves with no mum. But also many a little lamb with it's own problems and it's own name, loved and cared for. Also, as usual, unfortunately, most of them died. You have to accept the fact that that is how nature works, but it is a hard lesson, and one that causes Liz much upset.

There were brighter points, like the romantic sight, as one walks up the yard in the early frosty morning, of the muck heap steaming gently in the early mist.

Although Andy wasn't here, a friend from up the road, also called Liz (but known as Elizabeth to resolve the confusion) was here to help. She has helped for the last two years

and certainly knows her stuff. Generally, she and Liz did the pre and post natal care, and I did the general welfare - feeding etc. It worked very well, and one of the jobs that requires considerable skill is the castration of the young ram lambs. Elizabeth was allowed to do this, but only if she promised not to enjoy it!

As the mums go out with their lambs, each family has a number painted on their sides so we can identify them. Elizabeth and I both did this job as time allowed, and, because I am not at my best in the mornings, one ewe finished up with 53 on one side and 76 on the other. Confused the hell out of me, but didn't seem to bother her lambs at all!

At one point, we needed to get a hay feeder into the shed for the orphanage, but it looked quite big, and as I was sizing the job up, Liz asked me what I was doing.

TAC & NHS

We were out in the fields cutting down the thistles when it struck. It started like a bad attack of wind (a subject with which I am passingly familiar) but rapidly got worse. The doctor advised an immediate trip to the local hospital. It was your mother's worst nightmare. I was in my farming clothes. Underwear anything up to three weeks old!

I knew I was in for a bad time when, within a few minutes, the

nice young lady doctor (looked about five years younger than Vicki!) announced that she was "just going to give me an internal rectal examination"! Could it get any worse? Yes it could! The next day when I had been admitted, the same lovely young lady fitted me with a catheter. She actually looked so young that I felt constrained to ask her if she had actually done this before. She had. By this time I had three pipes sticking out of me, and every time I wanted to go to the loo (which, I have to be honest, wasn't all

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued on page 2)

Foot and Mouth

(Continued from page 1)

(you get the picture). As we struggled to get the fence up, the little lovelies broke through into a field of newly planted winter wheat. This was UP the hill on the other side of the field.

Have you ever tried running a 200 metre sprint in underwear, a normal shirt, a pullover, jeans, an overall, waterproof over trousers, a waxed jacket and wellies? It is not easy, but I broke the world record. When I got there I was so pooped that I didn't have the energy to even wave my arms. Fortunately the lambs understood the rules of the game and realised that because I had got there, they had to leave the field! Very sporting of them I thought. Not a run I would like to repeat.

All this was exacerbated by the fact that Andy was poorly, and simply didn't have his usual inexhaustible supply of energy, so I was trying to do as much as I could, both out in the fields and at home. So by February I was ready for a break.

What happened in February? Foot and Mouth. It was ALL we needed. Fortunately, we had brought all our pregnant ewes back from their winter keep down in Burton on Trent two days before the clamp-down on transport, so we did at least get them home, but everything else was a nightmare.

We just shut the place down. Nobody in or out. Not even the postman or the milkman. No cars. Mine stayed outside for the duration, and Liz's stayed in. No visits in or through infected areas (so Liz didn't see her Mum for about four months) Foot baths at all gates. Disinfectant spray for those vehicles we couldn't avoid like the feed lorries. And the constant worry of the sheep actually catching it. In the end (and we hope to God it is now the end) we only had one outbreak in South Derbyshire, and that was quickly contained. But it didn't stop the worry.

And in all this – lambing. No sheep movements were allowed, so Andy had to lamb at his place – with no real shelter but plenty of expertise, and we, heaven help us, were lambing at our place – plenty of space, no

expertise! One hundred and eighty ewes depending on our skills as shepherds – and those of you who have followed this newsletter assiduously over the years will realise the full depth of the ignorance involved there.

Fortunately for the ewes good health (and our marriage), a highly skilled local lady, also Elizabeth, (who has helped us in the past) volunteered to help, and best of all, she was quite happy to do the night shift. Were we lucky or what?

Between us, with the odd call to Andy, and two nights when the Vet was called out in the wee small hours, we staggered through a very good lambing with the vast majority surviving. But it was a hard time, and one that, after the winter that had just gone, I did not feel like repeating. Andy found lambing at home relatively successful, (for reasons too long to explain here, but which I am happy to discuss with anyone sufficiently interested) and thinks he may even do the same next year (2002). Which means, of course that we would be on our own again.

So we have not put the tups in this year. Andy has borrowed our ewes for, probably, their last lambing, and we will have a rather quiet spring here. On the bright side, we shall certainly be up at Andy's helping (in our own unique and very special way!), and, movement legislation allowing, we will probably have the odd lamb or two down here in the orphanage.

So, for the third or fourth year running, there will be no children here to wonder at the young lambs, and hold two day old orphans for feeding. I will always remember that first year when, because of Tago and Julia's contacts with other young parents, the place was filled with awe-struck young children.

Whether this will be the end of our sheep breeding adventures only time will tell.

Talking of Julia and Tago, Julia needs an honourable mention as she was absolutely fantastic during lambing providing meals for the freezer, soup and sandwiches at lunch time, and even chocolate brownies. Thanks to her and Tesco.com we managed to survive very well,

(Continued from page 1)



that often at this point) I had to carry my catheter bag in one hand, carry my NG bag (nasal gastro-something - ensured I wasn't sick by sticking a tube up my nose and down to my stomach) in the other, and drag my intravenous drip stand with the third. An undertaking of sufficient magnitude that I think I only attempted it once.

When our young friend Alice (aged 4 and a bit at the time) heard I was in hospital alone she immediately said to Liz "He can't stay there alone, he will have to have something to hug", and forthwith lent me her Pooh Bear, who sat on my drip stand for my entire visit, taking care of me. This, of course, in the men's ward.

Anyway, all is now well. I have only the highest praise for the care I received at the DRI. Yes it was busy, noisy, and at night it was sometimes difficult to sleep because the chap opposite me was having a bad reaction to morphine and spent most of the day shouting things like "why has that man got a tin of salmon

on his head?" and most of the night sitting on his pillows trying to take all his tubes out, but the nurses were wonderful from the sister right down to the cleaners.

For instance:-

We left home in such a hurry that neither of us had any money with us so, when Liz came to get the car to go home, she couldn't pay for the car park. One of the young nurses lent her the money. (presumably she thought I was sufficient collateral!)

When I was scheduled to go for my op, Liz stayed with me right up to the time I was wheeled into theatre. Those of you who have had a general anaesthetic will know that very peculiar feeling as you come round. Where am I? What am I doing here? There is this fuzzy image of faces looking down, disembodied voices seem to shouting at you, but none of it makes any sense. There, in this sea of stuff I couldn't make any sense of was a face I knew and love. So I stuck my hand out, and the feeling was lovely. Liz had been able to wait for me in the recovery room. It was 11 o'clock at night by then and she spent that night in a visitors flat on the ward. Truly wonderful.

Airport Car Park Shocker

It is probably old news by now, but we had a very interesting experience last January. We flew with Easyjet from Luton to Nice to stay with our friends Phil and Anne for a few days. Five days to be exact, but if we had stayed for six, it would have cost more to leave the car in the airport car park (6 days at £6.30) that to buy

the two air tickets (2 flights at £17.50). Incredible.



and some of us even put on a little weight!

Ordering our groceries over the internet from Tesco.com was very successful, but, in case anyone is thinking of trying it, we did get one or two strange substitutions such as yoghurt when I had asked for fabric conditioner, but for the most part it helped a great deal.

The Chisman Marbles

Loss of marbles became just a matter of time this year when the first (presumably of many) was heard to drop with a resounding clang as I pointed the telephone at the television, pressed "2" and wondered why the channel hadn't changed!

A Tale of Three Phones



It was not the best of years, it was not the worst of years. Well, not much farming been done this year other than running around after lambs – see (Stalag Knowle on the back page). No major new toys to play with. No major mistakes made. No demolition jobs done. BUT – two new mobile phones.

Just before, and during, lambing we feed the ewes a concoction based on molasses, known round here as treacle, because of its similarity, both in colour and viscosity, to that much loved liquid. Other shared characteristics include a great stickiness which make pouring up to twenty buckets of it out daily a, shall we say, messy sort of a job.

Liz would stand by the large tank in which it is stored, and fill the buckets (the last of the famous pink buckets from two years ago for those of you with especially long memories), while I would carry them out to the dispensers, and pour it in.

We were quite good at this, but one morning, as I bent over to pick a bucket up, my mobile phone popped out of my top pocket, and with a *gloop* sort of a sound – disappeared into the bucket of treacle. Very slowly. Very gently. Like some vast ship sinking in a brown ocean with bits in. Did I panic? Did I run round in circles saying "I've lost me phone, I've lost me phone" (See "Red Adare story on the right). I did not. Without a moment's hesitation, I slipped my hand in the stuff and started to feel around for it. I found it, whipped it out of it's leather case and stripped the battery off. With the battery off, water getting in is less of a worry, so I

washed it under the tap, and stuck it in the airing cupboard for 24 hours.

If all this sound vaguely familiar (again to those of you with good memories) you may recall me doing something similar a couple of years ago when Andy dropped his in a bucket of water in a similar incident. Now, as then, the treatment was successful. The phone switched on, connected to CellNet and settled down. However, when I phoned Liz to request a cup of tea, I could hear her perfectly saying "What? What?". The treacle had got to the microphone, and I could not be heard.

Now, a phone that allows me to hear but not speak might sound like a good idea to some of you, but I wasn't very happy with it, so, having ascertained that my Nation Farmers Union "Farmer's Covers Everything" policy did in fact cover me for dropping my phone in unspecified nasty places, off I went to the local phone shop and got myself and upgrade – for £5. But the policy has a £50 excess – so I paid it myself!

Having gone through the pain of learning a new phone (although I managed to keep the old number and my list of phone numbers), I then left it in a taxi coming home from the A&E department of the DRI at three o'clock one morning! (Another story!!!).

The taxi driver denied it the next morning of course – and I needed another phone. So, having ascertained that my Nation Farmers Union "Farmer's Covers Everything" policy did in fact cover me for leaving my phone in unspecified nasty places, off I went to the local phone shop and got myself another phone, but this time for £50. But the policy still had a £50 excess – so I paid it myself! Again.

The number was transferred OK, but my whole phone book had to be typed in again.

I still have this phone!!!... So far!

From Lucy Pinney on Bridget Jones's Diary

Unashamedly copied from The Times Weekend Supplement

"Mark Darcy's horrible Christmas jumper also made us thrill with recognition. With a rural man you have to learn to see beyond the peculiar outer garments to the personality within. Sometimes there are ill-fitting overalls, too, along with aged overcoats pungent with animal smells, and highly individual headgear. The point is that this sort of man is not using his clothes to show off. At the very most, he wants them to help him blend into the foliage. What he does care about are the

truly important things. Like food. In the country, Bridget would never be able to get away with a fridge that contained just one mouldy piece of cheese. Anyone who hopes to win the heart of a countryman has to be capable of preparing at least three essential dishes: a roast with all the trimmings, a chocolate cake, and a full English breakfast. And, moreover, every single part of that breakfast has to be British (farmers always check wrappers).

Animals also play a critical role in the romance. Bridget believes that a fling becomes serious when she gets asked on a minibreak. For those of us in the country, the defining moment comes when a man finally trusts you to look after his livestock."

Red Adare - where are you when you're needed?

The central heating boiler was out.

Actually we have had several instances of that this year, but that is another story – not one printed here fortunately. Suffice it to say that the last time it went out I had to have 1800 litres of contaminated oil cleaned out from the tank at a cost that would have kept even me in Guinness for over two years!!!.

Be that as it may, the boiler had gone out. There was a slight smell of oil around, but no worse than we have had before, so I just bent down and pressed the little red button. Whirrrrrr. As normal. Whooooooosh. As Normal. Click. As normal. BANG. Not normal. CRASH. Very not normal. Gouts of flame from the burner. Very definitely very not normal. Then a previously unnoticed pool of oil on the boiler floor catches fire and starts to burn, and there is a risk of towels and such hanging up to air catching light. Starting to be quite frightening.

What did we do? Well, actually, I ran round in little circles in the kitchen, saying "We've got an oil fire, we've got an oil fire".

Liz thought I had lost it big time, but in fact I was calmly and clearly defining the problem in order to establish the optimum solution. Well, any solution would have done at that point, but that was my story and I am sticking to it.

The one thing you don't do, of course, is to put water on it, and I am not sure what sand would have done. Converted itself into a burning pile of sand was my thought. (If any of you know the answer to this, perhaps you would let me know in case it happens again). What my calm, considered approach finally came up with

(when I say finally – that is in relation to the vast number of possible solutions that flashed quickly through my head, the actual answer appeared in micro seconds) was a wet towel. Starve it of oxygen and remove the heat. Very similar to a chip pan fire really.

A bit frightening though, and Liz says she will carry to her grave the picture of me going round in circles saying "We've got an oil fire, we've got an oil fire"

