

There's a hole in my bucket.....

So, I get out in the yard, it's beautiful spring day, and I need to collect all the hurdles from round the farm and get them up to Andy's place as he is lambing and a shortage of hurdles is making life difficult.

Unfortunately, when I look at the little trailer, one of the tyres is soft and it needs pumping up.

Unfortunately, the tyre pump fits on the power take off from the tractor and the muck

spreader is currently attached to the tractor.

Unfortunately, I can't take the muck spreader off as last week one of the tractor tyres exploded (don't ask - both rear tyres are knackered) and the tractor can't be moved.

Unfortunately, the tyres that are going to replace the two on the back of my tractor are currently on Andy's tractor. This is because his rear two are nearly finished, but have enough

life in to give me a couple of years, and with a single rear tyre for a tractor at around £400 you save the pennies wherever you can.

Unfortunately, Andy is too busy with lambing to have the time to sort out the new tyres for his tractor, and the only way to help this is for me to take up a load of hurdles

Unfortunately, I can't do that because the little trailer has a soft tyre, and it needs pumping up

Droppings of the Year

"Two entrepreneurs from the Rhondda Valley and Caerphilly have succeeded in creating an environmentally friendly product that is completely Welsh: greetings cards made from sheep droppings.

By mixing the sterilised waste with recycled paper they produce between one and two tons of new paper and cardboard a year. Their Sheep Poo Paper firm has now won a £20,000 Millennium Award for "social entrepreneurship".

Sunday Times 10th Sept 2006

You may want to sniff any suspicious Christmas cards you receive.....

Needless worry of the year

A friend was trying to get the photos out of her brand new digital camera.

This can be a difficult task, so she was particularly careful when she took the little card out that it wasn't exposed to the light.....

Aspersions of the Year

When Liz was in hospital the second time, she wondered if her problems might have been caused by chlamydia which can be caught from contact with wet lambs.

When she asked about this, the doctor (not a farming type) only knew one way to catch it and clearly thought her morals were a little lax. Much amusement although perhaps flattering at 54!

A Small Notice

I changed the car this year, and have become a BMW driver.

Those of you who know me well will understand the reason for the absence of a picture, and the inconspicuous nature of this notice.

Christmas 2006

This has been a busy year medically speaking, with various hospital visits, and the associated convalescence periods (where she could be forced to take it). Liz has been in, Terry has been in, Cousin David has been in, and at the time of writing, Andy is still in. Hence the name change this year

The flat and the camp site have been pretty full, and which means we have met lots of new people, mostly good (but see *Disappearing Plums* on page 4).

After lambing was done, the farm was quieter, and it will be a bit like a graveyard over the winter as we have sold all our sheep for this year, although there are a few animals wintering here (but see *Andy* on page 3).

Vicki and Nash continue to flourish, with Nash, after much searching, having found a permanent job last January.

So all that remains is to wish one and all a politically incorrect *Merry Xmas*, and a

A Difficult Lambing

Lambing this year was a bit of an ordeal. Between us and Andy, there were 60 very young mums to lamb. So, to make life a little easier, Liz had all the "singles" (no, not single mums - none of them is married - the ewes only scanned for a single lamb) down at Knowle Farm and Andy had the rest (500 odd) of his flock up at his farm. We got the shed ready, and everything was set for April 7th when it was all scheduled to start.

Unfortunately, 5 days before, Liz was taken very poorly in the night and a visit to the night surgery in Derby got her straight into Derby City Hospital. This looked like a repeat of the visit the

The Knowle Farm Newsletter Lancel

The Story of Twiglet

Once upon a time, in a land not too far away, a shepherdess had all her sheep in for lambing. And just as the lambs were starting to be born it happened that she fell ill and was taken to hospital. "Oh dear" said all the mummy sheep, "what will become of us with no shepherdess to look after us"?

Just then a passing lady looked into the lambing shed and said "Can I be of assistance"? "Oh yes please" said all the mummy sheep, "our shepherdess has been taken ill and there is no one to feed us and look after us".

So it was that Elizabeth (for that was the lady's name too) came to look after all the mummy sheep and all their baby lambs.

She came up every morning and afternoon and fed them, she changed their bedding, she made sure they had plenty of water, and when they were ready she painted their number on them (so she could tell which little

lamb belonged to which mummy), she gave them some nasty medicine to stop them being poorly (but she tried *very* hard not to hurt them) and sent them off to the big wide world to play and gambol in the sun. (She also cut some of the bits off the little boy lambs, but we will pass quickly over that, and she wasn't allowed to enjoy it anyway.)

This went on for several weeks, and, when she was over the worst of her illness, the shepherdess returned to her flock. Unfortunately, she had been very poorly indeed, and wasn't able to do very much to help Elizabeth, but she did what she could, and all the mummy sheep were very grateful.

One unhappy day, one of the mummy sheep died. She passed away peacefully and all the other mummy sheep tutted and fretted about what would happen to her little lamb. He was very sad indeed that his mummy had gone away and left him, even though the shepherdess and Elizabeth told him every day that his mummy loved him and hadn't wanted to leave him.

Bit by bit they persuaded him to



feed from their bottle, and although it wasn't as good as having a mummy around, he began to drink and slowly turned into a proper lamb. Not a big lamb to be sure, but a lamb nevertheless.

Then, one day, when the last mummy had had her baby, and the last little lamb had been painted and given medicine and sent off to play in the sun, when Elizabeth had cut the last little bits of the last little boy lamb (still not enjoying it) poor Twiglet (for that was his name)

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discharged and came home to find that lambing had started. And there we were. Liz convalescing, ewes lambing, and Terry not able to cope with that end of an ewe, cooking, or general domestic duties. Difficult.

A friend, coincidentally also Elizabeth, rode to the rescue. She loves lambing, and is very competent, so we gratefully left a lot of it to her. Not all of it though, and occasionally we would be unable to keep Liz away from the pens. Not the best way to get better, and in fact, as the days and weeks went by, the pain remained.

Finally, after about three weeks,

Liz was readmitted to the City Hospital, but in the Gynae ward. They poked and prodded, opened her up again and had a good look at all the bits, hum-ed and ha-ed, but really didn't find much. After rather more information than Liz was entirely happy with had been published on the web site, keeping friends and relatives up to date, and the world had hung for several days on her every movement, she was discharged (again) and this time told to do nothing. But the pain was still there.

Eventually, a retired surgeon friend told us that the problem is

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Arrivals and Departures

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London and couldn't take them with him.

Of course, coming into this household they were given their own blog on the website to keep family and friends up to date with the settling down period. This included Rocky's story of getting stuck in the vegetable garden (he couldn't see the point of it - just green stuff and no

sign of a mouse) and Herby's early encounters with Mackay.

Herby and Mackay just didn't like each other. Well that is actually an understatement! There was a great deal of fur flying every time they got near each other. Finally, during lambing, Mackay worked himself into such a frenzy that he had a heart attack. Well, I think that is what must of happened. There wasn't a mark on him. I was dreadfully sad as we had had him for 8 years and I discovered that I only had one small photo of him.

In October, we lost Herby as well. Again no mark on him. He just looked as though he was

walking across the field and keeled over. The two sparring partners are buried side by side in the orchard - just far enough apart to avoid confrontation.

So we are left with the two more reserved cats - Chivers and Rocky who have decided that they like each other after all. Neither is at all interested in hunting and they spend most of their days asleep or telling anyone who will listen that they are never fed and are totally neglected. Rocky did scare us in the summer when he went on an eight day jaunt. I think it was the hot weather. He is black and long haired and I guess needed to find somewhere cool to lie low for a bit.

The Disappearing Plums

2006 was a good year for plums - at least on our plum trees it was. We have two, a larger one that produces nice eating plums, usually by the ton, and a small Victoria plum tree that we bought to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. The Victoria tree is still very small, but this year produced a bumper crop of absolutely delightful plums. As late summer wore on I really enjoyed driving the lawn mower to and from the camp site as it enabled me to fill my pockets with plums, which I would then eat as I plodded up and down mowing the camp site field. Nice plums are just about my favourite fruit, and I was as happy as Larry.

(This is not going to end well - you can tell that can't you?) One weekend Liz told a couple who had been on the camp site for over a week to help themselves to a few plums if they wanted some for their fruit bowl. And the next thing I see is the man walking away from my little plum tree with a plastic bag full. The tree was bare. I couldn't believe it, but I couldn't do much as I didn't know exactly what Liz had said. I checked with Liz that evening, and we resolved, rather rude though it might be, that I would go and ask for some of them back! Too late! By the next morning they had left, plums and



This is, I am afraid, another story in my struggle to avoid growing old at all costs.

For a very special birthday present, Liz bought me a flight in a Jet Provost. This is a two seat jet trainer and was used by the RAF as the first jet that a pilot would fly. This was going to be exciting. The chap who owns and flies it also has an aerobatic display that he will fly at your garden fete, and I was anxious to do that - I love aerobatics.

On the day, I was prepared by the co-pilot. He was a young man of sixteen who has worked round this aeroplane for a few years and actually got his pilots licence in it on his sixteenth birthday - the earliest it can be done. He cannot, of course, drive a car yet so on Mondays, when he gets together with his slightly older mates at school and they talk of their Saturday night trip to Skegness, all he can do is casually drop in his Saturday trip



The Story of Twiglet

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was left all by himself in the big empty shed. "What shall we do with him" said the shepherdess to Elizabeth. "We can't just send him out by himself." So they sat and thought. Then they had a cup of tea (without biscuits). Then they sat and thought again. Oh dear, it was so difficult.

In the end Elizabeth had a wonderful idea. "Why don't I take him home with me, and he can live in my back yard with Tops, my dog." (His full name is Tops E., so called for the lady's full name was Elizabeth Turvey).

The Continuing Struggle

to the Costa Brava!

So, I was equipped with flight suit and helmet, and despite my protestations, six sick bags - all, as it turned out unnecessary, despite the fried breakfast when I arrived. Off we went. Pulled 3.5g off the runway, and I was not completely prepared for that - a strange feeling.

We stooged around the sky for a bit, and he let me fly it, but I am not a terribly experienced pilot and would require several hours to get the feel of it. I did however get to do a roll.

Then it occurred to me that he was gradually increasing the severity of the manoeuvres, just to see my reaction - to see if I reported feeling sick. I didn't and things just got more and more exciting. At one point we were flying along the M180 at



about 500 feet doing 300+mph. His comment was "I bet a lot of those people down there would rather be up here"!

We arrived at a roundabout and went into a vertical climb, bursting through a little puffy white cloud and doing a hammer stall at the top. We then hurtled back towards the earth, and flew back down the M180 at about 500 feet doing 300+mph, but this time upside down. My comment - "I bet a lot of those people down there are very glad they're *not* up here"!

We did a high speed beat up of the runway (which Liz failed to photograph) and I did get to finish with the aerobatic display, which was fantastic. I should have had just a half hour, but I suspect that he doesn't often get passengers as resolutely not sick as me, and was quite enjoying the flying. As a result I

The Caterham

2006 was a good year in the Caterham. I went to Cadwell Park four times, (each time with a different co-driver), Oulton Park once, and we got thrown off at Donnington after 6 laps for being too noisy! (The car, that is, not the drivers!) One trip to Snetterton, and late in the season we went to Mallory on a Saturday, which enabled some friends to come along a get a ride in the passenger seat on a real race track. (See picture above.)

I expect to be doing more next year, so if you fancy a ride in the passenger seat (free) or a day in the drivers seat (definitely not free) please let me know and I will see what I

got nearly an hour - a trip never to be forgotten.

being fed a bottle in a Fresh Basil bag was pretty unusual.

Eventually though he grew too big for Elizabeth's garden, so she brought him back to the shepherdess again. They couldn't eat him (although the shepherdess's wicked husband would have done if they had let him), so they put him in with the other sheep to run about with, and they hoped he would live happily ever after.

Post Script.



Unfortunately, there he is - a sheep sheep surrounded by sheep - and he doesn't quite know what to do.

So the moral of this story is simple - trying to turn a sheep into a pet leads to a psychologically disturbed animal with no sense of it's own identity and absolutely no self esteem.

A Difficult Lambing

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often that, because surgery like appendectomy is regarded as routine, people assume that it is simple. In fact it is not. It is, like most surgery, a highly invasive process and requires much more resting than people think - it could take six months.

So Liz was put, forcibly, onto a program of rest. No Saturday changeovers, no ironing, no lambs. Much sitting, much reading, much TV, but she drew the line at knitting.

Meanwhile, lambing was still going on, and on top of that, the holiday flat was in full swing. Terry developed a very heavy cold and was so weak that at one point couldn't even manage to lift the two buckets of feed required for the ewes. More and more friends were called on to help with lambing, with the Saturday changeover and with feeding (us that is).

Cooking is not Terry's best thing, and it wasn't long before we had run the full gamut of his abilities from a to b - takeaway Chinese, takeaway Indian, fish and chips, beans on toast and back to takeaway Chinese. At one point he was even going up to the pub to eat and bringing Liz back a plated meal. To save us from the worst of this dietary nightmare, even more friends rode to the rescue with pre-cooked food and more plated meals.

I would call it a fairly busy time.

Difficult though it was, we kept Liz on her rest, and she started to get better. She is still getting better and we hope it will continue. If she does too much it comes back. but I suspect it is all a ruse to avoid housework.

Lambing eventually finished, with mums and lambs doing well. All's well that ends well. We have rarely been more grateful for all the friends we have, all the help they gave, and all the food they provided.

I was much luckier. I saw the



Andy

As many of you will be aware, Andy has not been well recently, and he finally went into hospital for his big op at the beginning of November, and it *was* a big op. At the time of writing, he is still in hospital and has been for over 3 weeks. (3 times round the entire menu - he is fed up.)

He hasn't lost his sense of humour. When asked if he was allergic to anything, we

understand he said 'Yes, scalpels!'

We all wish him a speedy recovery, although we strongly suspect that, like Liz (front page, and left), he is not going to take to convalescence. There have been suggestions of handcuffs, and filling his wellies with concrete - all of which, I predict, are doomed to failure.

Liz could well find herself with 160 ewes to lamb come early

consultant about my hernia on one Tuesday and had the operation a week later. I walked

from hospital bed to car, and two weeks after that I was driving the Caterham round

Arrivals and Departures

It's been a bit of a year for arrivals and departures. We lost Maurice the Maran cockerel and Duchess our beautiful silkie cross chicken to the fox, but we have gained six Warrens (no names as yet as we can't easily tell them apart). They are so friendly you are inclined to trip over them as you walk along. In fact, they joined in with a game of cricket being played by

Christopher from the Cottage and his mate. They tried them as wicket keepers but they kept missing the ball, they couldn't hold the bat and they

tended to bowl too low. They weren't very good at fielding, either, and no amount of cajoling would persuade them to act as either stumps or the ball, but worst of all they tried to cheat by getting under the boy's feet so they conceded the match and retired. The hens really enjoyed the sandwiches for tea. however!

On the feline front, we welcomed Rocky and Herby two 9 year old, long haired cats, just before Christmas last year. They had come from Bromsgrove as their owner was moving to



Bit of a Mess on the A38

A friend of Andy's - Tommo - was after some sugar beet to feed his animals, and he heard of a real bargain up the road near Mansfield. So he hitched the big trailer to his tractor and off he went.

Now, the road to Mansfield is the dual carriageway A38, which is quite busy with some quite fast moving traffic, but it does pass through farming country so you will often see a tractor plodding along in the inside lane. So Tommo with his tractor wasn't an unusual sight.

He arrived safely, and loaded up his 20 tons of sugar beet and set off for the return journey. He was within spitting distance of his exit slip road when there was a great crash and he was pushed off the road as a lorry (who had failed to spot how

slowly he was going) ran into the back of his trailer, rather spoiling the line of it. Worse - causing 20 tons of sugar beet to tumble out all over the road.

This was bad but it gets worse - the lorry that ran into the back of him was a concrete lorry and it proceeded to add it's six tons of concrete to the mess.

So there it all was - a tractor in the hedge attached to a rather bent trailer, a bent concrete lorry sitting in the middle of the road, both surrounded by a mixture of 20 tons of sugar beet and 6 tons of concrete. - which, of course, started to set! Bit of a mess - no photos I am afraid.

Tommo was taken to hospital, but there were no lasting after effects (apart from a closed A38 for the rest of the day).

Andy's only comment was "I wish he'd called me, I just needed 20 tons of beet and coincidentally, I also needed a load of concrete".