

THE REDLAKE

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From the Editors

We count ourselves very fortunate to live in such a beautiful part of the world, especially now in 'lockdown', as we have lots of space all around us which makes it feel not so bad. Lots of other people have it so much tougher. The local community is pulling together, as neighbour helps neighbour, and a small band gather on Thursday to clap for the NHS & key workers at 8pm in the street. Most people are shopping locally, which is how it should be in an ideal world. The local store and butcher are stepping up and supplying a good variety of local food that more than caters for us, and a lot more home deliveries of local foods as well.

On another note, I would just like to thank Hannah Willetts who is retiring from writing her Garden Column, which she has written since the very first edition, and has been the one who has sent me her copy on the first of the month, which often reminded me an edition was due!

Thank you Hannah.

Jeremy Jameson

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Picture taken from Purlogue to Chapel Lawn,
by Ken Bowen

More information and photos of some of these articles are available on the website at <http://www.chapel-lawn.co.uk>

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS BIRD? THE PLIGHT OF THE CURLEW

We regularly see requests in the Redlake News for sightings of the Curlew to be reported. In the Redlake, the Curlew has been heard near the headwaters of the river for the last two springs, but the pair of curlews are not thought to have nested there. What is being done to help the curlew and why is it important to report sightings?

I am told by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT), the main reasons for falling Curlew populations are a loss of moorland habitat due to changing farming practices, the loss of hay meadows and the trend towards silage making, sheep grazing, and other countryside changes meaning it is easier for predators to find Curlew nests on the ground.

Not of all the changes due to farming are relevant to the Redlake where farm and livestock numbers have declined.

Four organisations: The SWT, Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS), The Upper Clun Community Wildlife

Group (UCCWG) and Curlew Country (CC) in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), have made funding and volunteers available to enable Curlew conservation. CC found that at egg stage, nests have failed mainly due to Fox predation (over 50%.) Badgers predated just under 25% of nests and the remaining few have failed due to a range of circumstances including trampling by livestock and crow predation. Badger and Fox populations have increased in recent years. The idea has been to protect Curlew nests, reported by landowners and birdwatchers, with electric fences covering a 25 sq metre area. Curlews take two months from hatching to flying, this is the critical period. The fencing has increased the number of eggs that hatch, but the birds leave the nest after a couple of days and are then predated in the following 32 to 38 days preceding flight. As well as fox and badger, weasels, pine martens, stoats, rats, escaped mink and polecats might take young chicks. When you add in the Corvids and Raptors the Curlew is up

against it. Proof of predation is either carcasses found or radio tags discovered, some in raptors nests.

The campaign to help the Curlew continues, including continuing to protect nests and monitoring chicks to try and increase survival rates. CC are focusing on rearing eggs and releasing fledged birds using a technique known as headstarting. Longer term the Curlew needs restoration of traditional nesting habitats and recognition and support for upland farmers to enable this. In Shropshire the key areas for Curlew conservation work are the Stiperstones, Clee Hills, Upper Clun valley and from this year the Strettons, with funding for this from the National Trust's 'Stepping Stones Project' (with support from the People's Postcode Lottery).

If you would like to help fund Curlew Conservation please visit the website of the organisations mentioned above SOS, CC, UCCWG.

I would like to thank Jan McKelvey, Conservation Officer at the SWT for her help with this article.

Steven Oakden

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOCELYN WILLIAMS



Jocelyn Williams celebrated her 90th Birthday on the 19th May, I'm sure the Chapel Lawn Valley would like to send her best wishes, remembering her as a special teacher in Chapel Lawn School.

Jocelyn was born at Underhill, Lloyney to Wilfred (Fred) and Lucy Jones. Fred was a builder/ coffin maker, she had a big sister Brenda. She went to school in Llanfair and then carried out her teacher training in Hereford. Jocelyn was an active member of young farmers, enjoying speaking and drama. She held her first teaching post at Knighton Primary before joining Chapel Lawn.

Joc met and married Jim Williams, a local farmer and went on to have 3 children Sally, Simon and Kate, she now lives at Monaughty Poeth farm near Llanfair. Jocelyn spent over 20 years at Chapel Lawn, a very nurturing and warm character, who had time for everybody. As a former pupil myself Joc would never raise her voice and was always able to captivate her audience which ever lesson she taught. Another pupil of Mrs Williams, Cath Stead, said "Joc is a wonderful person, definitely the best teacher that ever was. Chapel Lawn school and pupils were lucky to have you"

Christine Oakley

MAKING DO

Recent days of shortages have brought back memories of an earlier life.....Almost 50 years ago my husband, Julian, and I left London to live in Britain's northern most island, Unst, in the Shetland Isles...(Don't ask!) Situated where the North Atlantic and the North Sea collide, it was sometimes

subject to atrocious weather. The island had three little shops, the one in the centre included a bakery. The shops were supplied from Lerwick, the only Shetland town, which is itself 200 miles north of the Scottish mainland. The goods came up to Unst on a small steamer; the Earl of Zetland, which called three times a week - when the weather allowed!

The island was self-sufficient in a limited range of food: milk, from the farm where Julian worked, mutton, beef, potatoes and turnips (neeps and tatties) kale and some, but a surprisingly limited, amount of fish. Most crofters kept a small boat, but because of the frequently stormy weather, fishing was often not possible. Much of the fish was caught in the summer, salted and dried, and hung round the walls of the kitchen for use throughout the year. Crab, however were readily available. There was a small slaughter house where sheep and the occasional beef animal were butchered. The beef was eaten fresh, but much of the mutton was pickled in brine and hung in the rafters to dry in the smoke of the peat fires 'reestit mutton' - tastier than you might think!

In the shops there was always a range of tinned foods available, not least tins of Quality Street, much enjoyed by the Norwegian sailors who would shelter in the voe (harbour) in storms. The range of bread available from the bakery was limited; white, brown and bannocks. I learnt quite quickly to make things like croissants, chelsea buns and lardy cake. A lot of the bread was sold to the Norwegian trawlers and it generally tasted slightly peculiar as vinegar was added, which supposedly kept it fresher for longer. When the Earl couldn't dock and the flour ran out at the bakery, the shop sold a very long lasting biscuit, not the food of choice!

The lack of variety and, frequently, of availability, was just a part of normal life in Unst. When you went to the shop, with luck, not long after the boat had called, you appreciated whatever was there; particularly fruit and vegetables. If it wasn't there, or the quality left something to be desired, and it frequently did, blackened bananas a common occurrence, then you just put up with it and didn't think twice about it. Our local shop, run by Harald, would

ask the wholesaler in Lerwick to send up whatever fruit and vegetables they had, to a certain value. This occasionally had its upsides. I called one day and there was a box of lychees on the counter 'Ooh' I said 'lychees!' 'What are they?' asked Harald. 'Oh' I said 'they're lovely!' - I picked one up and peeled it to show him 'Oh no, I don't think we want those' said Harald 'you can have them' - and handed me the whole box.... Oh Joy! On another day I was told there was a cucumber in the shop; I rushed there and it sat all alone in the glass display cabinet, I opened the lid and picked it up.....squelch!

It was a great adventure to go to Lerwick, which I only undertook a couple of times a year. There was no supermarket, but the shops were larger, the range wider, and there was a wholefood shop where you could buy nuts and dried fruit other than currants and sultanas. You could go either by the Earl of Zetland, a lengthy and stomach churning experience or 'overland', which involved two ferries & three bus journeys. You had to stay in Lerwick overnight as the trip each way took nearly half a day, but the excitement of returning with dried apricots, a variety of nuts and a box full of interesting groceries knew no bounds!

There were innumerable joys to compensate for the occasional difficulties. I could see porpoises, and sometimes whales from my house and seals were ten a penny! I would walk to the shop along the seawall which in Spring would have Eider duck cooing below you. Curlew and whimbrel abounded, puffins, skuas and terns were a seasonal and plentiful treat and if you knew where to look you could see, but more likely just hear, corncrake. Wonderful views were everywhere and the Northern lights often performed.



Vinegary bread was a very small price to pay for such enormous pleasures!

Jane Kent

WHAT A FEW WEEKS OF LOCKDOWN CAN DO TO A MAN!



Mr N Paul Todd is not only an anagram for Donald Trump, but is the name of the person who captured the real Donald Trump and is holding him hostage while pretending to be the President. Mr Todd is CEO of a household cleaning fluid company in Pittsburgh. He also has a crush on Melania. He is quite similar to Mr Trump facially and in stature. On realising that with elocution lessons, a small amount of cosmetic surgery and a lot of orange hair dye he had a way of increasing his company's profits and making love to the woman of his dreams, he put his cunning plan into action. P.S. Don't tell Trump's supporters. They'll want the real one back.

LOCKDOWN LINGO - THE NEW TERMINOLOGY:

Coronacoaster

The ups and downs of your mood during the pandemic. You're loving lockdown one minute but suddenly weepy with anxiety the next. It truly is "an emotional coronacoaster".

Quarantinis

Experimental cocktails mixed from whatever random ingredients you have left in the house. The boozy equivalent of a store cupboard supper. Southern Comfort and Ribena quarantinis with a glacé cherry garnish, anyone? These are sipped at "locktail hour", ie. wine o'clock during lockdown, which seems to be creeping earlier with each passing week.

Blue Skype thinking

A work brainstorming session which takes place over a videoconferencing app. Such meetings might also be termed a "Zoomposium". Naturally, they are to be avoided if at all possible.

Le Creuset wrist

It's the new "avocado hand" - an aching arm after taking one's best saucepan outside to bang during the weekly 'Clap For Carers.' It might be heavy but you're keen to impress the neighbours with your high-quality kitchenware.

Furlough Merlot

Wine consumed in an attempt to relieve the frustration of not working. Also known as "bored-eaux" or "cabernet tedium".

Coronadose

An overdose of bad news from consuming too much media during a time of crisis. Can result in a panicdemic.

The elephant in the Zoom

The glaring issue during a videoconferencing call that nobody feels able to mention. E.g. one participant has dramatically put on weight, suddenly sprouted terrible facial hair or has a worryingly messy house visible in the background.

Quentin Quarantino

An attention-seeker using their time in lockdown to make amateur films which they're convinced are funnier and cleverer than they actually are.

Goutbreak

The sudden fear that you've consumed so much wine, cheese, home-made cake and Easter chocolate in lockdown that your ankles are swelling up like a medieval king's.

Antisocial distancing

Using health precautions as an excuse for snubbing neighbours and generally ignoring people you find irritating.

Coughin' dodger

Someone so alarmed by an innocuous splutter or throat-clear that they back away in terror.

Covid-10

The 10lbs in weight that we're all gaining from comfort-eating and comfort-drinking. Also known as "fattening the curve".

...and finally, finally: One sentence to sum up 2020, so far: At one point this week, 1 loo roll was worth more than a barrel of crude oil!

Patrick Cosgrove

SEASONAL GARDENING NOTES



It is the time of spring verging into early summer, which is usually one of promise and rejuvenation. This difficult year should make that hope still more important for all of us, particularly those of us who are in isolation. The word garden comes from a Persian word for enclosure, so it is an appropriate place for seclusion.

Working in your garden can do much to solve worries and concerns. It can actively heal you to feel the soil and sense the growth and beauty all around you. It is the best exercise, whether gently deadheading or actively digging, and all in the fresh air. It alleviates boredom and also helps to fill the depleted larder - if you can grow vegetables and salad leaves, even in pots if you have no spare ground.

As I know from my own experience, a time of illness reverses the usual concept of gardening, because it is at such a time that the garden begins to look after you. Just sitting in your garden, even if you can't work in it, you will feel absorbed by it, protected and nurtured. Then you can begin to grow on.

Hannah Willetts

TOMATO BAKED EGGS

INGREDIENTS

900g ripe tomatoes (preferably vine)
3 garlic cloves
3 tbs olive oil
4 large eggs
2 slices of bacon finely chopped (optional)
5 mushrooms finely chopped (optional)
2 tbs chopped parsley

METHOD

Preheat the oven to fan 180C/ conventional 200C/gas 6. Cut the tomatoes into quarters or thick wedges, depending on their size, then spread them over a shallow 1.5 litre ovenproof dish. Peel the garlic, slice thinly and sprinkle over the tomatoes. Add bacon and mushrooms if desired. Drizzle with the olive oil, season well with salt and pepper and stir everything together until the tomatoes are glistening.

Slide the dish into the oven and bake for 40 minutes until the tomatoes have softened and are tinged with brown. Make four gaps among the tomatoes, break an egg into each gap and cover the dish with a sheet of foil. Return it to the oven for 5-10 minutes until the eggs are set to your liking. Scatter over the parsley and serve piping hot with thick slices of toast or warm ciabatta and a green salad on the side.

Di Cosgrove

FARMING COLUMN

A very wet winter thankfully turned into a dry and warm spring which made it pretty good lambing weather for most farmers. Our ewes have mostly lambed well and the dry weather has allowed us to put them outside soon after lambing which has made a lot less work in the sheds and helped reduce disease. Ewes and lambs are all outside on grass now and have hopefully got over the first hurdles of a sheep's life. (Some literally as well as metaphorically!!)

The next job on the list will be shearing which will be starting around late May. We like to get it done fairly early to avoid problems with fly strike and ewes getting stuck on their backs, which is much more likely with a big itchy fleece on than without. As the weather warms up ewes can die very quickly on their backs, so if you ever see one with its legs in the air, please go and turn it over!

At a time when plastics and manmade fibres are being questioned on environmental grounds you would think a natural and versatile product like wool would provide a great alternative and be sought after for all kinds of uses. However the price farmers receive for their wool still barely covers the shearing costs, and sheep are only shorn for their own welfare rather than

because it makes any money. I hope as people become more aware of the damage caused by plastic fibres wool will once again become a profitable product, but I suspect someone will have to tackle the oil barons before that happens!

I hate to mention the dreaded "C" word... (don't worry its only Coronavirus!!) but I have been asked to so better had! To be honest I think most farmers have been fairly lucky compared to some of the other key workers who are facing far higher risks. Also many other rural businesses like pubs and some shops have had their trade decimated whereas farming in general has been going on more or less as normal, with suppliers and markets still open. We are certainly very thankful to live out here with plenty of space and far away from virus hotspots, and to be fair farmers are fairly used to self-isolation at the best of times!

Livestock and milk prices have been affected by the lockdown to varying degrees, with some farmers having to pour milk away if their buyer relies on selling it to the hospitality trades, and finished beef prices are not great either. Sheep prices seem to have so far been largely unaffected as yet other than a few blips, although as things progress nobody is really sure how this will affect market prices later in the year.

There are a few interesting things that have come out of the crisis which might lead to positives in the long run... One is that transportation has been shown to be a much bigger environmental villain than farming (which they seemed to blame all the world's problems on before!) with air pollution dropping drastically once flights were grounded. Also a few weeks of empty shelves has done a lot to focus minds of how vulnerable our food supply has become, with Britain now almost entirely relying on a handful of huge food companies, and an increasing proportion of our food being imported. Hopefully this might make people realise how important it is to produce British food again. The situation has also proven that people do want to buy local food and support small businesses, with many well supported deliveries of milk, meat, veg and bread to surrounding villages again which is great to see, and the food tastes loads better too!

Some people have commented that Coronavirus has caused the world to go "mad", but I'm not so sure... Perhaps the lockdown, forcing a return to people spending more time at home with their families, shopping locally, growing their own food, and spending time in their own communities rather than jetting all over the planet actually sounds far less "mad" than what we had before!

Wayne Davies

POETS CORNER*The Wrong Note!*

There's a musically- feeling
Sidling up to me this evening,
As I try to find the right note once
again.
As elusive as a raindrop,
But it's in my head and won't stop
As I stare at the piano keys in vain.
Now it's late, I can't stop yawning,
But it cannot wait till morning,
'Cos this tune has just been circling
in my mind.
So I'll drink another whiskey
In the hopes it will inspire me
To work out those perfect chords, I
need to find.
Midnight comes, and I'm still
trying,
And my brain feels like it's frying.
Then inspiration strikes - I am in
the groove once more.
I think I'm in Carnegie Hall,
Till my neighbour bangs the wall,
Shouting, "Go to bed, you fool, it's
half past four!"

Jem



If anyone would like to write an article to replace Hannah's, please get in touch, as it is always nice to hear about a hobby, skill or interest.