

## YOU DONT HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT TO OPEN A CAN OF WORMS, BUT IT HELPS.

ONE SWALLOW does not a summer make, so we are warned by our wise forefathers. I glimpsed my early summer visitor, a lonely little figure perched on a telegraph wire near Eynsham on April 12th and as the weather at the time was fine, sunny and pleasantly warm, I fell for it again, lulled into the expectation that harsh winter had finally quit and other than pleasant showers to freshen up our gardens, from now on for a few glorious months it would be all sunshine and flowers — not a bit of it.

Even now, into the second week of May, temperatures are going up and down like a yoyo and cold mischievous winds and unusually sharp frosts have severely damaged some of the burgeoning growth. Evidence of this fact can be seen on trees that have brown shrivelled leaves among the normal foliage, some have been damaged quite badly.

I heard the cuckoo for the first time when visiting my sister-in-law at Ilmington, near Chipping Campden, on St Georges Day (April 23rd) I must confess I'm always pleased to hear the old rogue calling his name and it heartened me somewhat as with the bird's history of greed it would be unlikely he would arrive before there was a plentiful supply of fat caterpillars awaking him, and of course you need the kinder weather to hatch them out.

When you hear the swifts screaming their call around church steeples

and high buildings then you can be reasonably assured of sun on your backs, however having experienced many years of our unpredictable weather, snow in June for instance, go along with never casting a clout etc.

The first Sunday in April was beautifully sunny day but for us an extremely sad one. "Honey " or "Bungie" as we called her, our dear old golden labrador gave us one of those almost apologetic looks telling us that life was becoming too much of a strain. She was 13 last September but had gradually succumbed to arthritis which had been miserable for her, although she still enjoyed her food and the occasional rough and tumble with the border terriers.

Thus we had to make the decision that all dog lovers dread having to take and gently loaded her into the back of the car driving her up to Stow in the Wold where we had arranged to meet the lady vet who delivered "Jessica's" puppies just over a year ago. When it was all over we brought her back home and so she is still with us in her new resting place and will always be with us in our affection.

At the end of the month we had another blow when we had a further raid from that wretched dog that delights in taking our bantams. On this occasion he accounted for our young cockerel who was in the peak of condition.

None of my family or friends recognise me as a practical sort of cove; to

illustrate this embarrassing fact my wife has been known to gleefully recall a time on holiday, soon after our marriage, when apparently I selected five different deck chairs before I managed to get one correctly set up.

Every so often the "memsahib" will leave me to my own devices with instructions of what I can find to eat in the fridge that doesn't need anything but the simplest culinary skills. That is all fine and I can cope. With thoughts of my meal on a tray watching television I decide that some warming soup would be just the ticket for starters. Ah, but that is where I have to take on the new space age can opener.

This "thing" appeared overnight sometime last year, ejecting the old one, which had seen better days, but even I could manipulate. I grant you it does look like a can opener with the usual knurled gadget for clamping on the lid. But instead of having something to sink it's fangs into the metal it has a lever that pulls out at the side which presumably must be designed for this purpose. The knurled bit is completely uninterested in being clamped on the lid side and what the lever is for I haven't the faintest idea because it doesn't appear to achieve anything no matter how much you jiggle it up or down.

After about ten minutes of trying different methods of effecting entry, I find that other than superficial scratch marks and minor indentations to the tin and a rapid rise in my blood pressure, nothing has happened at all. The lure of thick steaming tomato soup with just a dash of Worcester

sauce is just too much and stays my hand from hurling the can and opener across the neighbouring field.

Shamefacedly, I march around to Reg Ray next door and ask him if he would open the confounded thing. This of course, is the man renowned locally as a chef de cuisine, who only recently conjured up lashings of different curries and mouth watering sweets in the noble cause of funding the village hall appeal.

He smiles good naturedly and with a few turns from his wall can opener he rapidly returns my lunch starter. I fancy he feels that my domestic capabilities ought to aim higher than something that only needs heating for a few minutes! I intend to purchase one of those inexpensive clamp on the side and turn type of openers. We do actually have one in the house, a geriatric model that is used to open the dog food, but for hygiene reasons I am not allowed to use it.

The only other version of extracting food from tins, that I know of, was the type that you thrust into the tin and then cut a jagged edge around the surface. Happily nowadays they seem to be collectors pieces which is just as well for the outpatients departments of hospitals up and down the length and breadth of the country. The mind boggles of the number of types like me that must have been logged in with gashed fingers and stab wounds to the hand.

As for the "thing" I'm convinced it smirks at me whenever I open the kitchen utensil drawer.

Tony Boardman