

## COUNTRY PIE

Tony Boardman

**L**IKE IT OR NOT, summer is fading and inexorably we move on to the autumnal scene. I must confess that I have always enjoyed autumn for it's a pleasant time of the year. The intense, sometimes stifling heat that we experienced recently gives way to a bright but cooler atmosphere and early morning walks display the masses of different spiders web constructions liberally sprinkled with dew.

The combine harvesters have done their work and left the stubbled fields strewn with swiss rolls of straw, later to be collected to provide bedding for the stocks in the winter to come. Blackberries in the tangled hedgerows and rosy apples collected in baskets in the orchards remind us that it is harvest time and a time possibly to reflect that the year is moving into the last phase.

Certainly this summer has been a mixture with April and May occasionally producing the blue skies and sunshine more accustomed to late June or July, whilst when flaming June did arrive, it was more in keeping with what is expected in February. The appropriate footwear was wellies rather than flip flops.

August will be remembered for being hot, dry and clammy with poor quality in the air in the sultry conditions. We all expected thunder storms to clear the air but except in a few local areas they were not forthcoming. Consequently any form of effort brought about an unpleasant condition that I was brought up to

understand as glowing for ladies, perspiring for us chaps, whilst presumably all the local horses sweated in profusion. "It were right sticky" as they might say up North.

This bits and pieces climate did make it a bumper year for the insects and along the food chain, our bird life. The wasp-like hover fly seemed to be everywhere, fortunately, as they assist the gardener by consuming aphids. The butterflies, which were absent in the early summer, were now everywhere to be seen once the dry sunny conditions arrived.

During our morning walks with the dogs, Sue and I would often count the numbers of hedge brown or gatekeeper butterflies seen enjoying the early sunshine flitting about the hedgerow. A medium sized butterfly, the male is quite colourful with large patches on his wings the colour reminiscent of custard, say orange perhaps but not really yellow. The birds nested early and in some cases managed an extra brood, which with the clouds of various insects about, made their task of bringing up youngsters a little easier.

We were delighted to note a return of those elegant black and white lapwings in one of the fields, on one occasion well over a 100 took off to wheel around to return later once we were out of sight. They were plentiful and a common sight decades ago and hopefully they are on their way back.

I am the first to admit that when it comes to matters of practicality I am usually found wanting, ineptitude is a word that fits the bill adequately. I suppose it is because I seem to have this unfortunate knack of disrupting most things mechanical which, until I start using them, had previously worked perfectly well and for long duration. Now it came to pass that I was doing some Saturday morning vacuuming in the sitting room which to me is an arduous but rewarding task particularly when you can see the results, rather like mowing the lawn. Mind you it doesn't help when you have to disengage forcibly a small but resolute border terrier who is hell bent on savaging the hand-propelled suction part.

Usually on the onset of fetching all the paraphernalia out and well before switching on, Jessica and Primrose recognising the assembly of this roaring monster lick their lips and discreetly move well away from the scene of action.

Not so the old gentlemen who pretends to be completely disinterested but nevertheless follows me around stationing himself in vantage places where it suits him to rush out with a roar and attempt to clamp himself on to the brush part that I am trying to push across the carpet. Whether it's the noise or the movement I cannot say but it

irritates him so much that he really gets in a frenzy with it and I have to switch off until he calms down before trying to complete the job.

Having suffered several attacks I was peevishly keeping one eye out for another possible onslaught when I was suddenly aware that the equipment seemed to have become lighter. At the same time I realised that my effort was completely in vain. Looking around I discovered that the hose had come away from the motor part. How many years I wonder has that hose faithfully remained positioned correctly? Countless people had patrolled up and down various carpets, floors etc. without any problem whatsoever having probably walked miles in the process. So why me, eh?

Can I share with you a classic in the 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' gems that we are all familiar with when our children select a wrong word. Our friends Audrey and Leslie's youngest daughter Lorna, when told that there was no cream to put on the dessert came up with "Oh well never mind, we'll open a tin of that exasperated milk"! Lorna, I hasten to add, is a mother herself now, but never will she be allowed to forget her little clanger. If any reader can come along with a similar beauty like that please let me know. 831332

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