

"COUNTRY PIE"

Tony Boardman

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED that we experienced a little more than frequent April showers last month and the rainfall record of 4.5 inches of 1920 was passed and the all-time record set in April 1782 was threatened, if not smashed.

Severe flooding rarely happens in our part of the world, but this time it was virtually all around us and the chaos and damage it created was entirely unfamiliar to us. This sort of thing only happens elsewhere doesn't it?

Making a delivery for Sue in Broadway I was experiencing just a portion of the trouble during the afternoon of April 9th. Trying to get into the running stream rushing down Fish Hill that masqueraded as the High Street was quite alarming and I was glad to finally reach higher ground, after getting my shoes and socks soaking wet.

Do you remember Flanagan and Allen's "Any Umbrellas"? Now then, what are your thoughts about umbrellas? Personally, while I recognise that their function is excellent for their owner, I have never owned one and I confess to having been in awe of them for several reasons. The commonest reason being that in inclement weather, particularly when I am attired a little smarter than I am normally, well I might as well admit it, the 'Memsahib' insists that I share its shelter with her. In essence this seems like a good idea.

Unfortunately, being a little bit taller, I find the ensuing journey rather hazardous trying to fend off the 'sticky-out' bits around the canopy of the contraption. I also have a fear that in particularly stormy conditions the whole thing is suddenly going to turn inside-out and disintegrate and I might be expected to attempt to put it back into its pristine state. For one who counts the successful replacement of a light bulb a minor achievement the contemplation of the task would be of mammoth proportions.

I vividly remember watching a cricketing colleague of mine, who was noted for his sang-froid attitude striding towards the pavilion, umbrella aloft in a thunderstorm. Half way across the pitch the gloom suddenly lit up followed by a crashing clap of thunder, and as one we all searched the rain-swept square anxious for his safety.

We needn't have worried for with amazing agility he had made the confines of the pavilion in, dare I add, lightning speed! Apparently the air had been charged with electricity and poor old John had received quite a shock through his wretched broolly. Looking decidedly ashen in complexion and certainly wide-eyed and unusually ruffled he announced to his relieved chums that he had been hit by lightning. In the knowledge that he was in fact unscathed I'm afraid we just chuckled and told him that we had all been watching his progress.

I wonder why we tend to laugh at other people's misfortunes? The situation could have been very serious, fortunately it was not.

As a young man I worked in the centre of Birmingham at my father's office which required me to catch an early morning train from Streetly station which ambled through the pleasant countryside of Sutton Park, terminating at the New Street station. I knew many of the other commuters and as our numbers increased we frequently managed to have a compartment entirely to ourselves.

However, to deter any strangers from getting into our carriage at the other stations, we devised a devilish scheme of intently reading our newspapers fully opened which suggested that the carriage was entirely full, which it virtually was most days. Many of the young men were embarking on professional careers and had to be smartly turned out, hence the standard addition of the furled umbrella.

During one long summer I once asked Robbin Gelling, whom we knew as "Rufus" on account of his sandy hair, why in spite of the blue skies and scorching sunshine he still insisted on carting the confounded thing around with him. His answer was classic, "But my dear fellow

should one stop me in the street and ask me the way to Bennets Hill, how else could I point him in the right direction?" To which of course there just no answer.

I believe that the first device, a rather heavy cumbersome affair was produced around 1750 and sometime later a Scottish inventor called Macintosh invented a cloth waterproofed with rubber. He died in 1843 having given us the full raincoat which was named after him.

Can you imagine the misery our ancestors must have endured when out out in a downpour? Picture some grand masquerade with the highly painted Madame Pompadours and their exquisite dresses, not forgetting the dandies in powdered wigs, caught outside when the heavens opened? Oh dear, what a mess!

Finally I repeat our 'phone number should you have any original anecdotes you wish to share with us that are of an amusing kind, (01993 831332). We would be delighted to hear from you.

Another old cricketing colleague recalled their gardener, on being praised by his mother on the fine colourful state of the garden answered "Ah Mum, it do look picture-squee at this time of year don't it"!

Shipton Fête - July 4th

Bric-a-Brac and 2nd Hand Stall in aid of Wychwoods Day Centre.

Toys, Games, Unwanted Presents, Household Items and Clean Clothes wanted. Also helpers on the day.

Please phone Caroline Beaumont on 831891
or bring to Shipton Standing, High Street, Shipton.

Thank you for your support.