

**COUNTRY PIE**

by Tony Boardman

**I**SN'T IT PERVERSE? Whatever time Easter falls, whether it is early or late, the weather is always absolutely terrible. The idyllic image of fluffy chickens cavorting in the spring sunshine seems particularly absurd when the rain is pouring down. I think we are all delighted to bid farewell to one of the wettest Aprils since records began.

I recently had the opportunity to visit Branscombe in Devon, which is a lovely seaside village. On an interesting countryside walk with our canine friend Jessie, we saw a wide range of wild flowers, masses of primroses, bluebells, stitchwort, and even red campion were in bloom.

The following day we went to the New Forest which was alive with golden gorse, and I spotted a beautifully coloured male stonechat. We felt sorry for the ponies all clustered together in the muddy conditions. We saw our first swallows as we drove through Beaulieu, which was a relief, as they were later than usual this spring.

Now I look forward to long summer evenings, taking tea from a bone china cup, whilst sitting on the lawn. I look forward to the sound of leather on willow, to having tea and sandwiches, to gazing at the glorious colours of the plants in the herbaceous border, the scented air and the distant bird song.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Book Review****THAT'S HOW IT WAS**

Women in the Wychwoods during World War Two. £5.50, 60 pages.

The History Society has produced this really wonderful portrait of life in the Wychwoods during the war years. It is a compilation of interviews with local women and beautifully describes the mood of the community. The book captures the naive enthusiasm of children who considered the onset of war a great adventure.

On 23 September 1940 there was a machine gun attack and a string of 6 bombs on Ascott. The 50th Northumbrian Division occupied Beaconsfield Hall from 1939 and many soldiers were invited into local homes for tea or Sunday lunch or merely for a chat.

It wasn't until 1940, when those same troops the locals had come to know were evacuated through Dunkirk, that many young people realised how serious the War really was.

The Women's Institute became the mainstay of voluntary activities in the area. And everyone knitted.

In 1940 the father of our present Dr. Scott, Dr. Gordon Scott, started a canteen for evacuees and their mothers to meet. The bombing of the city of Coventry was visible as a red light on the horizon and the sound of the German bombers could be heard. 10% of the local population was on active service.

A great many heroic people lived here and the community spirit was very strong.