

Countryside Alliance March

Marching for the countryside

Some fifteen coaches set off early on Sunday 22 September from the old Airfield at Chipping Norton. On board were many representatives from the Wychwoods including farmers, the hunting fraternity, blacksmiths, retailers, horse riders and walkers. From the start, the atmosphere was friendly and with whole families on board there was an enormous sense of adventure.

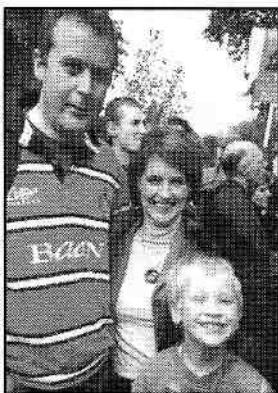
I was travelling with my son Max (7), who was marching in support of his pet ducks! His friend, Scarlett, lost her ducklings to a dog fox last year during the foot and mouth epidemic when foxes became very bold and started to raid back-gardens. Max now isn't a fan of Harry Fox!

Farming

My friend Mark, was there to support the farming community with whom he works closely. He has heard first-hand of the problems encountered in this sector. Another friend, Ellie was marching because, as she said; 'Everything I love in life is connected to the countryside from riding horses to shopping at Badminton!'

I was there for much the same reason. I love the British countryside because it is unique and I'd like to see those experts who care for it left to do their jobs as they see fit. Everywhere we look farms are being turned into fashionable barn conversions and we are losing a way of life without realising the effects it will have on the rural economy.

On arriving in London we walked to the back of the march which was a good



Mark, Ellie and Max on the march

quarter of a mile away. There were representatives from all over Great Britain, some dressed in their working garb, many carrying placards, one pony trotted past with a sticker on it's bottom which read; 'Please don't stop me hunting!'

The weather was kind to us, with only a spot of rain during the morning. The worst part was waiting for nearly two hours to begin

marching owing to those who cut in at the front of the queue-we suspected they weren't British!

Once we set off, the camaraderie and kinship of the marchers was wonderful. It was a long walk for legs that had been standing for some time but there was always something to look at, someone to wave to or talk about! We passed through St. James's and Trafalgar Square as part of a march of over 400,000 people. The largest protest of its kind in history.

Yet, as we marched past the Cenotaph every single marcher, even the youngsters, were absolutely silent in respect. Our weary legs passed through the march counter at 270,000.

The anti-hunt protesters were barracking us at the finish. Here a police presence was in evidence. Only 2,000 police officers had been assigned to this huge march which speaks volumes for the nature of the protesters. At the finish one 'anti' sign said: 'Goodbye Aristo's marching into your own extinction'. Aristocrats! Believe me, they couldn't have been further from the truth.

Jan Harvey