



**Simon Schama
Roger Scruton
Libby Purves
Johnny Scott
Ian Botham
Edward Fox
Ivan Massow
Daisy Waugh
Max Hastings
Zac Goldsmith
Edward Enfield
Anthony Beevor
Ranulph Fiennes
Frederick Forsyth
Jeanette Winterson
Clarissa Dickson-Wright
Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall**

Liberty & Livelihood

a portrait of life in rural Britain



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Nelson

Antony Beevor

THATCHERS, SOMERSET
© W.P.Andrews



When I was a small boy in east Kent in the 1950s, my hero was a woodsman called Nelson. Today, of course, he would be called a tree surgeon. He had white hair, a smiling, cherubic face and clear blue eyes. He was one of the kindest people I had ever met, as well as one of the bravest, working high in the branches of tall trees. In those days, there were no hydraulic towers and nobody wore hard hats.

My mother was the same age as Nelson and remembered him from her childhood. Nelson, the only son of a young widow, had been sent to the village school dressed as a girl. My mother told me this detail years later after she had heard a programme on the wireless. Apparently, in certain parts of the countryside, a belief had persisted up to the First World War that fairies would snatch a solitary male child. As a result, fearful mothers tried to pass their sons off as girls until the time they reached puberty. I immediately wondered whether my childhood hero had been teased or bullied at school. He certainly would have been hounded today in any urban playground. But in the real countryside community, one still finds a spontaneous kindness and tolerance of eccentricities unimaginable in city life. Today, fortunately, nobody would be frightened by superstition into sending a boy to school dressed as a girl, yet peculiarities still tend to be cherished. Even difficult characters are spoken of with a grudging admiration, if only because they provide endless food for conversation.

The pace of change – technological, economic and above all social – has been bewildering for everyone, yet up to now, the family and community has suffered far less disintegration in the countryside than in the city. But now the economic basis of farming and the traditional rural economy are in mortal danger. The attitude in Whitehall seems to be, 'Well, in the 1980s it was coal mining and the old heavy



DRY STONE WALLING
© John Randle

hearing the call of the mistle-thrush, the green woodpecker and the all-too-rare cuckoo. We love discovering the rich hedgerow harvest of berries, fruit and butterflies. Some of our hedges are wild and struggling, creating warm fields, sheltered from the wind with their own microclimates. I feel sorry for those people who have ripped out their hedges or who, obsessed with tidiness, trim them before the fieldfares and redwings have taken the berries.

Winter was when my late father, Charlie, would lay the hedges with Jim on a rotation of seven or eight years. They were days of great laughter, skill and woodsmoke. Now, my old hedge-laying friend Badger Walker arrives and we 'play' at hedge-laying. Badger wins prizes and loves his hedges – in fact his love has grown so great that he has

abandoned his 'real' job as a computer expert to become a professional hedge-layer. We both regard it as a considerable step up the social ladder.

Short straw? I've changed my mind. I didn't draw the short straw to write about hedges; it has been a privilege. Long may the hedge be part of the traditional English farming landscape – a landscape that should put people back in touch with nature, farming and beauty.

Robin Page writes the fortnightly 'Country Diary' in *The Daily Telegraph* and has written for the *Spectator*. He is author of *The Decline of an English Village*; *The Fox and the Orchid*; *The Wildlife of the Royal Estates*; *A Peasant's Diary*; *Gone to the Dogs* and *Vocal Yokel*. He presented the BBC's *One Man and His Dog* and in 1993 founded the Countryside Restoration Trust. He stood for the Referendum Party in the 1997 General Election.

DRY STONE WALLING (OPPOSITE)

Dry stone walls have been a feature of the British landscape for hundreds of years especially in upland farming areas where they replace hedges and fences as field boundaries. Known as dry stone walling from the technique of building without mortar to bind the stones, they typically consist of an outer layer of large stones concealing a core of smaller stones or earth.

Dry stone walls are built in the local available stone, such as limestone in the Cotswolds or slate in Cornwall, and there are also different regional styles, due in part to working in these different materials.

This ancient craft is now returning to many parts for economic as well as environmental reasons. Built well, they can last for hundreds of years with little maintenance, and their strong visual appeal is also increasingly popular with landscape gardeners.



POTTER
© Ken Wheller

CABINETMAKER
© Andrew Gilpin



A Living Countryside

Jeanette Winterson

SMOKY FARRIER
© W.P.Andrews



BENDING HORSE SHOES
© Samantha Lewis



The typical English village, with its pub, church, shops and crafts, is more of a fantasy than a reality, but it is a fantasy we are reluctant to give up, perhaps because few of us are as well adapted to modern life as we would like to believe.

The modern world is a twenty-four hour emergency zone, where human beings are pressed for time and space, working longer hours, sometimes for more money, but with very little sign of content. When we are not working, we are shopping, and when we are not shopping, we are jumping in the car trying to entertain ourselves. One of the saddest summer sights is the clogged motorways jammed with people 'having fun'.

The decline of vigorous village life is a complex layer of cause and effect with a long history. We could reverse that

decline, but that would take radical changes at every level. Within our gift, right now, is the chance to prevent further decline. By supporting rural jobs, whether craft, profession or labour, we allow people to stay on the land and connected to it. This is vital for the maintenance of our countryside, and something else, just as precious: we need a living countryside for the sake of our souls.

The farmer, the farrier, the dry stone waller, the reed-gatherer, the thatcher, the gamekeeper – make your own list – do the invisible work of the countryside, and allow us to enjoy what we think of as quintessential England. Often these people are not well paid, and don't own their own houses; what they stand for is a way of life where money is not everything, and where other values are still held to be important.

Food

Clarissa Dickson-Wright



GOING, GOING, GONE
© Rona Campbell

Part of my love for the countryside is that it has always been, for me, a source of food and I love food. Eggs tasted better in childhood when hunted for in the barn where the hens laid, blackberries tasted better picked from autumn hedgerows and milk straight from the cow. As a town child all these things were magical. Today I believe that one aspect of our beleaguered way of life that is progressing is food. True – thousands of people still eat ready meals from supermarkets and devour burgers that we wouldn't feed our dogs; true the governments of the time stitched us up over BSE and the horrors of foot-and-mouth disease (wot no enquiry!) but on the other side of the coin the huge growth of Farmers' Markets is, to me, a constant source of pleasure.

Back in the 1980s when Henrietta Green was the only person carrying the banner of real food, and supermarkets stalked the land like dinosaurs with their horrid unsafe imported food, all seemed lost. Then in 1997 the first Farmers' Market opened in Bristol, and a new era was born. In Winchester I learn the housewives now all plan their dinner parties around the week of the Farmers' Market, rather as our 18th-century ancestors planned them around the date of the full moon, known as the 'parish lantern'.

The impact of the Farmers' Markets is that new schemes are now bringing real food to the public. At Tebay service station on the M6 there are produce shops making real meat, vegetable and dairy products available to the passing public. I recently spent three days in Basingstoke to promote the new permanent food emporium. From Wednesday to Saturday you can buy real meat, fish, vegetables and bread.

Borough Market, which Jennifer and I opened in 1997, makes my heart swell with pride every time I visit it. It is a London market in the best tradition – where pickled lemons from Morocco and Batargo from Spain rubs shoulders with Somerset cider brandy or Cumbrian wild boar. Dear Peter



GENTLEMAN'S FACE
© Martyn Potter

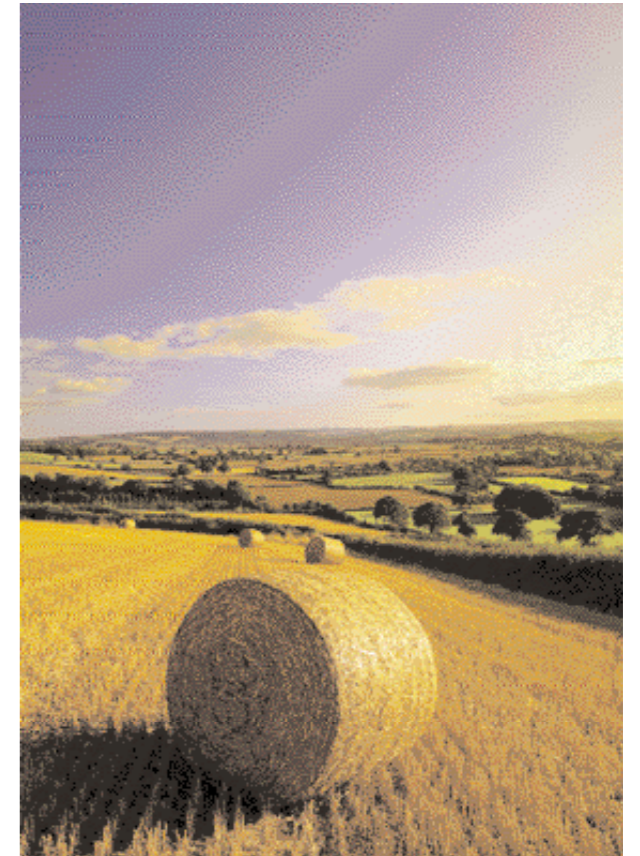
SOW'S EAR
© Martyn Potter



Gott sells bacon that satisfies even my desire for fat bacon, (I am Jack Sprat's wife in such matters). I eat the only burger I will eat from Jan MacCourt, whilst buying his lovely old-breeds meat. Borough Market is where Ginger Pig's photo page shows a group of Saltersgate Farmers, and is where a producer of real chickens will even sell you carcasses for stock.

When my great hero the Duke of Buccleuch began, at the height of BSE, his brilliant scheme of selling his tenants' beef direct to the restaurant market, he shot an arrow whose trail could be seen in all the farm-to-fork meat schemes. For example, I recently met a woman who sells her whole black-faced lamb crop at a premium on the

SHEARER
© Rose Hubbard



ROUND BALES
© Neil Buchan-Grant

internet as 'Heatherlamb'. Hugh Cavendish at Holker, recognising the value the French put on pre-sale lamb, marketed his tenants' entire salt-marsh lamb herd of 1300 beasts at a premium in London and the north west. Schemes such as these are a great help to farmers in these difficult times.

Farmers have always survived because they possess determination, stubbornness and ingenuity. The public, with their urban fear of death, are becoming more aware that what they put in their mouths determines their future

WAITING
© Lesley Smith



PIGLET
© Jason Dawson

HOSING DOWN
© Becky Griffiths



To Farm or not to Farm

Frederick Forsyth

Good, nutritious, fresh British food from British farms on British tables at an affordable price. A pipe dream or a possibility? I believe it is the latter, but only on condition that farmers and Government accept the inevitability of root-and-branch changes. The disasters of BSE and then foot-and-mouth disease were beyond doubt major contributory factors to the virtual collapse of British

farming in recent years: 'collapse', that is, as an industry, a career and a job able to offer a fair day's wage for a damned hard day's work. But these were not the real causes; what happened has been on the cards for years. Successive governments, right back to the 1980s, bureaucracy varying from the tyrannical to the spineless, and abysmal farming industry leadership have all played major parts in the



BULLOCK IN SUNSET
© Neil Buchan-Grant



CONTEMPLATION
© Neil Buchan-Grant



FROZEN CHIPS
© Pauline Rook

health, and that the world from which our Government imports cheap food is increasingly dangerous, unstable and expensive.

I, whose intrinsic good health comes from a lifetime of golden butter, beautiful meat, vegetables grown without supermarket practices and bread baked not steamed (remember the weight comes from the gin lake I consumed) will only be happy when everyone in the nation has joined me. It is now a light I can dimly see through the clouds.

Clarissa Dickson-Wright was born in London but from the age of ten recognised that her soul was happier with country people and country practices. After a lifetime dedicated to good food (and for a lot of it drink as well) she now finds herself in her fifties marching for Liberty & Livelihood, returning to the saddle to hunt and planning the catering for her friends when we all end up behind bars. In her latest TV project – *Clarissa and the Countryman* – she joins her lifelong friend, sheep farmer Sir Johnny Scott, to pay homage to rural Britain, sharing their passion for field sports and traditional country activities.

KNIT ONE, PURL ONE
© Sally Mackenzie



HAPPY PIG
© Pauline Rook



A Family of Pheasants

Edward Enfield

MOWN GRASS, HASELBURY PLUCKETT
© Pauline Rook



I always think a pheasant in the garden raises the social tone of the house by a degree or two. Peacocks are all very well, but noisy and a bit over the top. A handsome cock pheasant conveys a certain cachet as he struts about the lawn, which puts one way ahead of the Jones's without any vulgar ostentation.

So when a cock pheasant arrived, naturally I took steps to feed him so that he would stay around. He quickly grasped that he was on to a good thing and brought his hen friend along, and we would watch the pair of them wandering about the garden as if they owned it. Then the hen seemed to make herself scarce, until one day I came across her about two yards from the front door, right up against the wall of the house, nestling among some rockroses and looking rather nervous at the thought that I had spotted her. I tiptoed away, and when I next noticed her I found that she had been sitting on ten eggs. We would pass and re-pass a few feet from her nose; the postman and the newspaperman came and went; she never moved. A number of visitors came to look at her but she sat as firm as a rock and looked right back at them.

ENGLISH HARE

© John Eveson



EAGLE OWL

© Tony Shaw

**FROG IN WATER**

© Mark Fairhurst

**BIRD ON WIRE**

© E. M. Liddon

**BROWN HARE**

© David Mason

Although not native to Britain, hares were introduced at least 2,000 years ago for hunting purposes and feed mainly on grass, roots, bark and the produce of farms and gardens. Unlike rabbits they live in the open, and rely on their keen senses and great speed to evade predators.

Some of their elaborate mating rituals in the spring have led to the phrase 'as mad as a March hare'. When a female is rebuffing an amorous male, the pair often appears to be taking part in a boxing match.

A major survey in the late 1990s estimated the current population at just 750,000, unevenly distributed with the highest concentration in East Anglia. Concern over declining numbers led to the inclusion of the brown hare on the list of vulnerable species for which a UK Biodiversity Action Plan was written in the early 1990s.



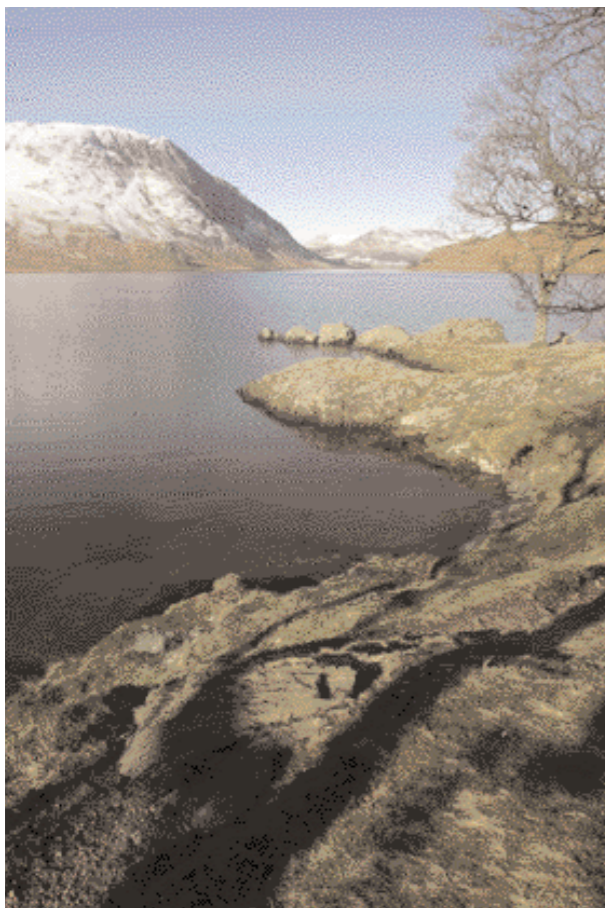
My pheasant-shooting neighbour explained to me that when the eggs hatched she would take the chicks to a supposed place of safety, whereupon magpies would eat them. "I'm not having that", I said, and built a sort of aviary round her out of old wire shelving. She looked decidedly anxious, but stayed put.

In the course of time, eight eggs hatched. The chicks emerged from under the hen and rushed around like mice, falling in the water bowl or sitting in the chick crumbs. They learned to fly surprisingly quickly and performed tiny aerobatics in the aviary. When I pushed some bean sticks in for perches, they sat on them at once. All in all, as pheasants

go, they seemed quite intelligent.

When they were six weeks old they were pronounced to be magpie-proof. We had a large, fox-proof, unoccupied chicken run at the bottom of the garden so we clipped their wings and moved them. When their wings grew back they started to fly out, so my neighbour suggested I should make pop-holes in the fence so that they could pop back. They were not intelligent about the pop-holes, preferring to walk up and down the wrong bit of the fence in a despairing manner, and I spent some time shooing them back.

Still, it all settled down. They came and went. There were five cocks and three hens, plus the mother, and having



CUMBRIA
© David Stephenson

half minutes – and there is nothing anyone can do to stop the slaughter.

Finally – hedgehogs. Harmless though they look, they can be very destructive – for instance they destroy sea-bird colonies by eating their eggs. Yet hedgehogs have a tremendous human fan-club. Early in 2003, when Scottish Natural Heritage announced that it was proposing to trap and kill 5,000 of them on the Hebridean islands of North and South Uist and Benbecula, there was not merely a national but an international outcry, with demands that the animals be saved and transported to alternative locations on the mainland. The cull for this year closed at the end of May, after only 66 hedgehogs had been killed, a little over a quarter of SNH's target of 200. Animal rights' groups apparently rescued 140 hedgehogs and transferred them to the mainland.

Again, it is a question of managing wildlife sensibly – and surely SNH is right to decide that the dunlin, redshank, snipe, plovers and oystercatchers which have inhabited the islands for generations should have priority over a species introduced only 30 years ago.

Duff Hart-Davis is the author of some 35 books, including *Fauna Britannica* and *Monarchs of the Glen*, a history of deer-stalking in the Scottish Highlands. From 1986 to 2001 he contributed the 'Country Matters' column to *The Independent*. He lives in a 17th-century farmhouse on the Cotswold escarpment.



FEEDING WASP
© Mark Fairhurst

DORMICE

The word dormouse probably comes from the French verb 'dormir' meaning 'to sleep'. Weighing about 20 grams and measuring less than 7 cm, the common dormouse is a strictly nocturnal animal and spends about three quarters of its life asleep. Mainly found in southern England, they have been in steady decline for decades due threats such as habit fragmentation and climate change.

RIP VAN & WINKLE © Sam Clark
Three dormice found hibernating in Somerset 2003



Gossip

Daisy Waugh



From my noisy, polluted, anonymous desk here in London W12, I make numerous telephone calls to my country-dwelling friends. For lack of any of my own, I collect their gossip from the village. It's a harmless hobby, and very useful for my line of work:

*I know her mother eloped with the school dinner lady.
I know he's been to jail for fraud.
I know her husband's going bust.
I know he dropped a German tourist 30 foot into a river
and very nearly killed him.
I know they set fire to their own B&B and got a lot of
money out of insurance.
I know he starved half his pigs to death.
I know she ruined their last party by firing a shotgun at
his head.
I know their goat's decapitated body washed up in a
dustbin bag on the banks of the river Exe.
I know it was witchcraft and I know which one's the
witch.
I know he likes teenage boys.
I know she's an alcoholic.
I know he's dying... And
I know they like to be naked when the news is on.*

All of this is true. By which I mean, of course, all of this I have heard. Rumour has it.

But there are no rumours where I live. No clues. No time for conversation at all. In London W12, we're either very busy or we're very shy, and besides we all speak different languages. Which is nice. Isolation and mystery guaranteed. Between the telephone calls I gaze out of my window and can watch an endless stream of enigmatic figures go by. Some of them I have watched for years; some of them I actually smile at; some of them, I strongly suspect, live in the house next door.

I'm not complaining. Far from it. Because although I live to hear of my country cousins' boundless peccadillos

From Yeovil to Yorkshire

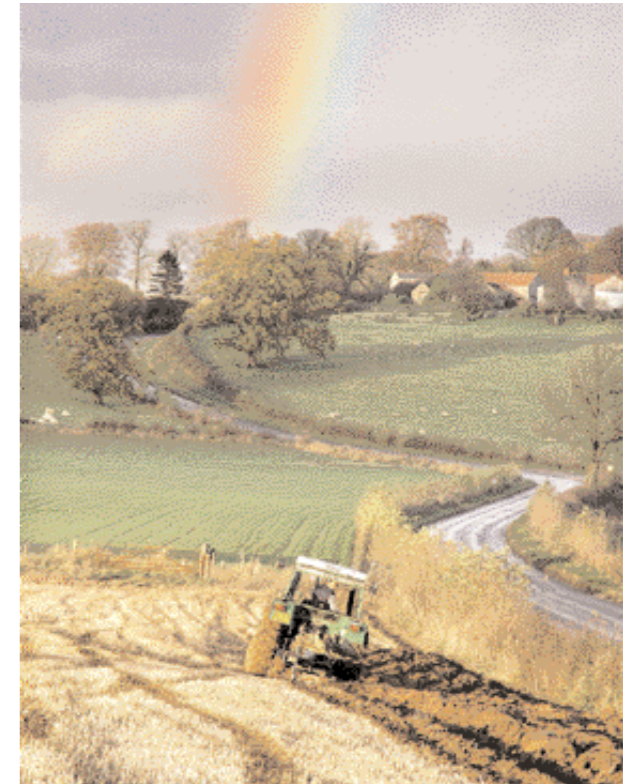
Ian Botham

When I was 16, I worked at Lord's Cricket Ground, and lived in London for a year and a half. It was the only time I've lived in London. I found it impersonal: a world away from Yeovil, the small town in Somerset where I grew up, and where I knew nothing but open air and empty roads and fishing the river Yeo in summer.

Now that I'm older and living with my own family in North Yorkshire, I take rural existence less for granted and am constantly inspired by it. I spend so much time in aeroplanes, hotels or foreign cities that when I have time off, all I want to do is to be at home in the country. My grandchildren spend their days in the fields, or on their quad bikes, coming home to feed the pheasant chicks in the woods and scanning the lake for fish in the evenings. Local loyalty is strong: we know if we are away that someone will keep an eye on our home. I have never found the same sense of community concern in cities.

There is so much that is beautiful in our countryside, but I believe strongly that we do need to understand that so much of it is managed by the people who live and work in it. They keep the banks of rivers clean and build up fish stocks. They look after fields, hedges and woods. Those who don't understand the British countryside need to see it operate throughout the changing seasons, see it managed by people who have intricate knowledge of it and have spent generations creating an extraordinary natural landscape.

Ian Botham OBE was a world-class cricketer who captained England 1980-81. His ability with either bat or ball was best seen in the 1982 series against Australia, when he effectively won two matches single-handed. His recreations include shooting, salmon and trout fishing.



CROCK OF GOLD
© John Eveson



VILLAGE TEAM
© Peter Glenser



DONKEY LADY OF CLOVELLY
© Victoria Hunt

The Sea, The Sea

Simon Schama

OYSTER FARMING
© William de la Hey



My earliest childhood memory is of my father standing on the other side of the French doors, which led from our grandiose sitting room out into the garden, lighting fireworks for Guy Fawkes' night. Beyond there were Catherine wheels and Roman candles but for the four-year-old me there were just sparklers. The next memory, though, is of the sea, infinite, steely grey, with washes of green, and the smell of it too, iodine strong with wracks of weed, which draped the beaches between Southend and Leigh-on-Sea.

It was one of my father's intermittent periods of prosperity, handsome enough to allow him to buy the big

OYSTER FARMING

Large European native oysters were eaten across Scotland during their heyday in 18th and 19th centuries. They were so plentiful and cheap that many recipes demanded up to 60 oysters per dish. The beds became polluted and over-fished, and were almost wiped out by mid-20th century. Their revival is down to farming commercially-cultivated – predominantly gigas – oysters although some farms are now experimenting with natives in sheltered sea lochs on the Scotland's west coast. Lochs must have shelter and be pollution-free with a rich supply of natural nutrients. The young seeds are placed in mesh bags which are put on wooden trestles at the low-water mark, or on plastic trays stacked on the sea bed. They are usually harvested after two to three summers' feeding.

River Cottage

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall



BEACHY HEAD
© Chris Mole

Although several valleys and ridges away from any possibility of a sea view, River Cottage is only about five miles, as the gull flies, from the sea. This sometimes seems odd to me, as when I am pottering in the garden, I tend to feel that I am entrenched deep in an inland rural Arcadia, so all-consuming that there is barely time, or mental space, to make room for the idea of a spectacular lime-cliffed coastline, dropping vertiginously to the gently contoured shingle beaches below – not to mention a vast expanse of sea beyond. So when, on some sunny summer evening, the pigs are fed and the day's work is done, the thought of a trip down to the coast sometimes strikes like a bolt from the green. The drive from River Cottage to the coast does not make the mental transition any more gradual. As the shoreline gets closer, the landscape doesn't dish out much in the way of clues. The rolling hills and gullies and the lush, loamy verges continue until I'm almost there. Winding my way through the pretty village of Eype on the way to my favourite beach, only the quaint house names – Sea Glimpse, or Shingle Tops – hint at what is imminent. Then comes the unmistakable taste of salt air. And as I sometimes forget around which bend it is that the sea can first be seen, I tend to brace myself. The final revelation still comes like a wave of light and noise that tingles the hair roots, just as it did when I arrived here as a child on holiday – after a drive of some four hours, not fifteen minutes. I like it like that. And though I would prefer to spend a lot more time on the coast and on the sea, especially now that I have a family, it still seems an unfeasible treat that it is there at all. When I do make it to the shore, I can revel in the rhythm of the waves, sipping at the shingle, then lift my eyes to the horizon and marvel at the sheer size and power of the water. It keeps me transfixed for, oh, minutes. And then I start to think about supper. Now that I have a small boat for potting and fishing, I try and make more time to get out to sea. Returning home with a few mackerel, a spider crab or even a couple of cuttlefish, to

combine in the kitchen with some fresh vegetables from the garden, is the best possible way to forge a link between land and sea. And returning home empty-handed, as I not infrequently do, is not so bad either. At the very least I bring back a raging hunger. These days, a trip out on the boat to pull the pots is usually a family affair. The catching, cooking and eating of the fish is a blithe family communion, the profound joy of which is hard to express. But for me, part of the thrill is that Oscar seems, unprompted, to be making that vital, respectful connection, between life, death and the kitchen. It's a spark of understanding that fishing nurtures perhaps more than any other way of acquiring food.

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's *River Cottage Cookbook* won the best food book award. Keen on cookery since he was a small child, he didn't train professionally, but instead studied at Oxford and travelled to Africa doing conservation work. Back in England, he became a *sous-chef* at the River Café, though he had to leave as he was too messy! Hugh has since become a familiar face on television with his series *Cook on the Wild Side* and *TV Dinners*. In 1997 he found River Cottage in Dorset, which led to two series being filmed there, *Escape* and *Return to River Cottage*. He is a keen supporter of the organic movement.

CORNWALL
© Joanna Eede





DUNGENESS
© Sophie Lindsay



TAKE-OFF
© Adam Davis

PUFFIN ON CLIFF
© Andy Thompson



Thoughts...

Edward Fox

GATEWAY TO THE MOORS

© Joe Cornish



Excepting religious faith, an awareness of the extraordinary potential for goodness in humans and of the beauty of birds and animals... how else can we know what God is, or might be? And how can Man be truly alive if robbed or debarred from an enduring contact with Nature – be it a hedgerow that borders an allotment patch, or the windy mountain crag?

I believe that Man is no more than the temporary steward of Nature, and must preserve her with devotion not just for his own, but for succeeding generations. The sight of neglected land by railway tracks, lazy hedgerow bashing by mechanical cutters and ugly storage buildings on farmland, devoid of sensitivity in their construction, are just three examples among countless other neglects of stewardship.

How fortunate that for every one of life's circumstances, Shakespeare, in beautiful expressive verse, encapsulates one's thoughts. I quote Duke Senior's speech from *As You Like It*; the last four lines are, in my view, piercingly succinct and relevant to today's world.

“Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
 Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
 Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
 More free from peril than the envious Court?
 Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
 The seasons' difference; as the icy fang
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
 Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
 This is no flattery; these are counsellors
 That feelingly persuade me what I am.
 Sweet are the uses of adversity;
 Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
 Wears yet a precious jewel in his head:
 And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
 Sermons in stones, and Good in everything:
 I would not change it”.

Edward Fox has spent his career in the theatre, and has acted in numerous films, including *The Day of The Jackal* (1973), *The Go Between* (1971), *A Bridge Too Far* (1977), *Ghandi* (1982) and *Never Say Never Again* (1983). He loves and supports all aspects of rural Britain.

Crop Circles as Land Art

John Haddington

It must stop. The technology is available to make necessary lights throw less glare upwards; it should be promoted vigorously. There is a hunger for stars, still: a few years ago comet Hale-Bopp drew the nation out into open spaces to adore its long shining peacock tail, and the Perseid showers are reported on the news even though few of us can see them. Even the occasional satellite, bleeping across the sky, is a reminder of how small the greatest human achievement is, next to Nature's. We must cherish the night sky. As one Campaign for Dark Skies

spokesman once said, 'the light from the rest of the Universe takes hundreds, thousands or millions of year to reach our eyes. What a pity to lose it on the last millisecond of its journey...'

Libby Purves is a writer and radio broadcaster. She has published eight novels and numerous non-fiction books, and is a main columnist for The Times. For 10 years she lived on a small organic horse-drawn farm in Suffolk with her husband, the writer Paul Heiney. The family still live in Suffolk, and are fortunate to be on a heath where the only interference with the night sky comes from Sizewell B nuclear power station three miles away.

STANDING STONES

© David Stephenson



STONE CIRCLES

There are more than 900 stone circles in Britain, although many have been badly damaged over the years. The oldest are thought to date from around 3000 BC and construction continued throughout the Neolithic period over the next 2,000 years. Some, like the great sites of Stonehenge and Avebury,

are dramatic for their sheer scale and the organisation that must have been required to build them. It is hard to imagine they did not have a significant religious or ceremonial purpose, and there is evidence to support an astronomical function, but Britain's stone circles remain one of the most intriguing mysteries of the past.

Whatever views you may hold concerning the origins of the intriguing geometric shapes that appear each summer in the fields of England, you have to credit their creators with great artistic flair. Crop circles have been appearing since the mid-1970s, and have given rise to a completely new form of artistic endeavour. The first circles were small and hardly noticeable to the passing traveller. They were only some ten feet in diameter, so you would have to virtually trip over them to see them at all. Today the formations that are appearing with great regularity in the West Country and elsewhere are huge and complex mazes, the symmetry of which you can only make sense of from the air. Perhaps the most famous recent formation was the Chilbolton 'Face' of 2001. From the ground no discernible pattern could be seen, the flattened stems of wheat were swirled in a chaotic fashion round blocks of standing crop. But when you were airborne you could clearly make out the image of a man's face. Likewise, the huge array of 409 circles on top of Milk Hill, in the Vale of Pewsey, that appeared in August 2001, were placed so that from the ground the observer had no idea of the size of the formation. Only a small portion of it could be seen from any one position, due to the slope of the hill. This formation had a diameter of some 782 feet, and viewed from the air was perfectly symmetrical and quite magnificent.

I spoke to the farmer on whose ground the Milk Hill formation had appeared. He said that in previous years when he had been visited by other formations, he had been extremely sceptical, and viewed them as the creations of vandals intent on publicity making money out of photographs and fooling the gullible. He thought that it really was a diabolical liberty to use his land without his permission in this way. There is no doubt that a great many of the formations which appear each year are man-made, either with or without the permission of the farmers. However, he said that when he saw what had been made in his field that summer's night in August 2001, he was awestruck, and had had to admit to himself that it was beyond his ken.

Many of the more obviously man-made formations are great works of art. They take small teams of dedicated



CHILBOLTON FACE
© John Haddington

MILK HILL

© John Haddington





LITTLE PIECE OF NATURE
© Anthony Fisher

on his motorbike to see it. That night he got chatting to some of the locals in the bar of the White Horse at Bampton. One of them had been rabbiting a few days earlier at a farm near Winsford, and heard it was for sale. The place was so remote and inaccessible he couldn't imagine anyone ever wanting to live there. The lads encouraged my grandfather to go and see it.

'The next night Johnny was back in the White Horse, buying them a drink in thanks. He'd liked the place so much he and the farmer had come to a verbal agreement on the spot.'

The farm is a sheltered oasis in the rugged isolation of the moor. Because of the height, the top farm is 1,300 feet above sea level, and the soil is unforgiving. It was nine years before my grandfather had his first holiday. Now, my father lets out the land to two local farmers and we mainly come here not to work, but to drink deep of the damp south west. Just as the family who lived here a century before us were the last on Exmoor to wear buckled shoes, our family has

staunchly resisted introducing mod cons, because we want the tone and atmosphere of the valley to remain.

Of course, my grandfather put in a bathroom instead of the Elsan, and my father has introduced two more 'new loos' into his longhouse. But the farm track remains as bumpy as ever. When my husband and I bought the farmhouse from my father, two years ago, we decided that we would do nothing to it at all.

As much as I love people discovering it for themselves, I love the fact that it is hidden and private. This is a bit of English paradise that will elude all but the most devoted hunters, walkers and riders and continue to pleasure, by its unchanging existence in the darkest countryside, my lucky family in particular for many years to come.

Rachel Johnson is a columnist on The Daily Telegraph. She is married to the lobbyist Ivo Dawnay, has three children and tries to spend as much time as possible on Exmoor, away from Notting Hill.

Ley Lines

Richard Madden

For me, the summer of 1992 was a strange and magical time. Living rough for a month in the fields and hedgerows of southern England may not be everybody's idea of fun. But a few physical discomforts were a small price to pay for the knowledge that I was following a sacred path that had not been trodden since Neolithic times.

I had been inspired by the work of two 'earth mysteries' specialists, Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst, whose now classic book *The Sun and the Serpent* proposed the tantalising proposition that there existed an ancient pathway of subtle energies connecting some of the most powerful ancient sites in Britain along an alignment running from just south of Land's End in Cornwall to the coast of East Anglia.

New-Age nonsense many would scoff – and did. But for my part, I was not in the least concerned. The truth or otherwise of Miller and Broadhurst's proposal did not change the fact that I would be walking through some of the most compelling landscapes in the country and visiting sacred spaces, wells, stone circles, temples, churches and burial mounds whose existence in the material world, at least, could not be disputed.

A Cornish childhood had given me a strong affinity with the many hundreds of ancient sites that punctuate the modern map of the British Isles. Most compelling were the stone circles that have stood for thousands of years on remote moorland locations, many pre-dating the construction

MOUNTAINS OF MOURNE

© David Kirk



FIRST LIGHT, BARBURY CASTLE, WILTSHIRE

© Adam Dale

**The Land of Liberty**

Andrew Roberts

It is an ancient and fundamental principle of our liberty that a Briton can dispose of his justly-acquired property in whatsoever way he so desires. Indeed it is a principle far older than Britain itself, since it was an acknowledged right of free born Englishmen ever since the end of feudalism in the 14th century. So long as other Britons are not practically and measurably worse off, a Briton should be allowed to do anything he likes on, and with, that which is lawfully his. To upset that principle is to strike at the very heart of our constitution, our law, our customs, our history and our way of life.

To be allowed to hunt foxes across privately-owned land is thus a basic right that should not be curtailed by those who are in no way practically or measurably worse off because it takes place.

Hunting is undertaken because the property-owner wishes to cull his land of a pest in a manner that is traditional, enjoyable and exciting. Its so-called 'cruelty' is as



PLAITING
© Nina Wright

Hunting

Roger Scruton



THREE HOUNDS
© James Shepherd



HRH PRINCE OF WALES
© Martin Elliot



NOSSES IN THE AIR
© Victoria Hunt

I began hunting in my early forties. It was quite by chance that I should be trotting down a Cotswold lane on a friend's old pony when the uniformed centaurs came galloping past. One minute I was lost in solitary thoughts, the next I was in a world transfigured by collective energy. Imagine opening your front door one morning to put out the milk bottles, and finding yourself in a vast cathedral in ancient Byzantium, the voices of the choir resounding in the dome above you and the congregation gorgeous in their holiday robes. My experience was comparable. The energy that swept me away was neither human nor canine nor equine, but a peculiar synthesis of the three: a tribute to centuries of mutual dependence, revived for this moment in ritual form. This energy swept me away from my old life as a professor in London, to be washed up on a farm in rural Wiltshire, married to a pre-modern woman as deeply attached to hunting by upbringing as I had become by conversion.

Maintaining a small farm in modern conditions requires continual labour, and a resourceful imagination. Nothing pays for itself, and everything must be subsidised from some other source. Every now and then we ask ourselves whether it is worth it. And on hunting days we know that the question is absurd.

It begins on the day before, with a visit from the master, who goes from farm to farm securing territory. Ours is Wednesday country, and the master is a farmer, born and bred here. He has known the residents for three generations, and speaks in his broad Wiltshire accent with intimate understanding of the fields and covers, as though he himself had charge of them. He tells you where he wants to go and his voice quavers with emotion, as though describing a favourite child. His role is like that of a priest, mystically transforming the landscape into a more spiritual version of itself.



VICTORIA HARRIS, TIVERTON HOUNDS
© John Burles



COTSWOLD HUNT
© Ann Chaffers

HIGH BIRD AT DUSK
© Steven Barker



Shooting

Max Hastings

For ten thousand years or so, it did not occur to man, the hunter, to justify the pursuit of quarry species, other than by bringing home food for the pot. But over the past few centuries, we have been gradually moving into a new era. Though fishers and shooters continue to eat what we kill – and it will be a bad day when we cease to do so – pleasure and personal fulfilment have become the chief purpose of sport. We are no longer hunter-gatherers in the traditional sense.

The changing nature of field sports means that those who practise them are asked to justify themselves, in a way that would have been unimaginable to our ancestors. My father used to assert with relish that 'death and sex are the principal business of our countryside'. Everyone familiar with the wild places knows that he was right.

Hunters of every kind are participating in a process of selection, cropping and predation which is a fundamental throughout the natural world. But a significant number of people today believe that it is wrong for mankind to take part in the culling process, and demeaning that human

WAITING GUN
© M.W. Bews



TOMMY AND HOUND PUP
© David Mason



hunters should gain pleasure from killing wild creatures.

One of the most important counter-arguments that hunters, shooters and fishers make is that we put into the environment far more than we take out of it. Almost everyone who pays money to take part in field sports is funding the cause of conservation, making a practical contribution to the welfare of the countryside of a kind that few advocates of 'animal rights' can match.

The Game Conservancy Trust has been conducting research to demonstrate this case for over half a century.

Since 1990, it has managed farmland at Loddington in Leicestershire on behalf of its Allerton Project. Everybody who is interested in field sports should be interested in Allerton. Its scientific findings are vitally important. Before the GCT took over, the land was unkept.

Over the past 13 years, thanks to a programme of habitat enhancement and vermin control, the wildlife population at Loddington has bloomed on a remarkable scale. The public at large will never care about populations of game species, especially those that are reared for shooting. But the

EJECTOR
© Jason Dawson



HOME
© Ray Moffatt



407,791 Came to be Counted

James Stanford

THE MARCH, SEPTEMBER 2002

© Henry Goddard



There were 407,791 marchers, a further 119,000 'marching in spirit', and 2,250 coaches from throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. There were special trains from 35 starting points, representatives from at least 30 other countries and more than 1,000 rural organisations. They all invaded London on Sunday 22nd September 2002 under the overall direction of the Countryside Alliance.

From dawn, as the first flecks of autumn dimmed the plane trees in the Royal Parks, they began to congregate. Coaches from as far away as Forres on the Moray coast and the very tip of Cornwall nosed their way into Park Lane or Southwark Street and, with quiet good humour, the passengers joined the gathering crowds in Hyde Park or on the Embankment at Blackfriars. London awoke to never-ending convoys of coaches and ever-flowing streams of people disgorging from the mainline stations at Liverpool Street, King's Cross, Waterloo and Paddington.

Those who were there will never forget the politeness and the extraordinary discipline of that volunteer army. Despite the difference in backgrounds, interests and activities, they were absolutely united on one point: they all saw the proposed hunting legislation as the 'last straw' in their dealings with Government. No better name could have been coined for the march than 'Liberty and Livelihood': both were at stake.



PAINTED LADY
© Andrew Bruce

© Leila Adams



© Adrian Fisk



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Six hundred years after Wat Tyler led the Peasants' Revolt, the countrymen and women of Britain and those who love its countryside, had declared that a line had to be drawn.

The marching crowds included princes, dukes, parliamentarians, former cabinet ministers and media celebrities. Even a pair of newly-weds fresh from their celebrations joined the march still in their wedding finery. Alongside them marched fishermen, jockeys, gamekeepers, coursing people, terrier-men, together with thousands of people who shoot and hunt including chasseurs from around the world, many of whom visit the UK every year and bring much-needed support to rural economies. Perhaps most noticeable of all was the vast numbers of children. From infants in their parents' arms to teenagers and university students, everyone seemed to sense that it

would be a hugely significant day in our rural history.

This would be the last peaceful march, and accurate number-counting was crucial. The final tally, confirmed by the Metropolitan Police after the most methodical count ever conducted at such an event, was nearer to 430,000. [The subsequent Peace Rally held in London prior to the 2nd Gulf war has been claimed by police – with no counting procedure in place – to be bigger, though in fact this was of a significantly shorter duration and over no greater distance.]

As Big Ben struck 10.00am, the two marches began to edge forward, slowing or speeding up at intervals to ensure that the carefully choreographed merger in Whitehall should go to plan. As precisely as guardsmen, the 'Liberty' march, after passing along Pall Mall and Trafalgar Square, streamed into Whitehall just as the 'Livelihood' marchers came into sight in Whitehall Place. Barely a yard separated them as they

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ROAD KILL
© Peter Dazeley

Farming

Zac Goldsmith

The principal sculptors of our countryside are farmers, and as they are under unprecedented pressure, there's one thing we can all predict without fear of being wrong – that the British countryside is going to change dramatically over the coming years.

The question is how? If current trends continue – if the agricultural establishment, namely the Government, National Farmers' Union and the giant food conglomerates – has its way, then the changes will be invariably for the worse. That is my opinion, of course, but poll after poll has demonstrated that it is also the opinion of the vast majority of people, farmers and consumers.

And there's a very good reason for this. The establishment has set itself the task not of finding solutions to the rural crisis, but of managing it. Time and again, the message from government and big producers is that a further erosion of our farm base is not only inevitable but necessary. If the market is allowed to select naturally the global economy's most efficient players, so the argument goes, then Britain's backward farmers will benefit from long-overdue streamlining.

Within the narrow context of their peculiar worldview, they're right. Small farmers can't realistically compete with giant monocultures in the south – or not without endless subsidies. For some to have a chance of being internationally competitive, many others would have to go. But why should they? What good would subjecting Britain's farmers to the brutality of the global economy actually achieve? More importantly, what would be the consequences?

Small farms are already giving way to larger farms, and farm workers are already leaving the land, *en masse*. So it's not hard to imagine where trends will lead us. A handful of small 'museum' farms will remain, dominated by large expanses of industrial agriculture, for which land itself is little more than a coincidence. The physical countryside will

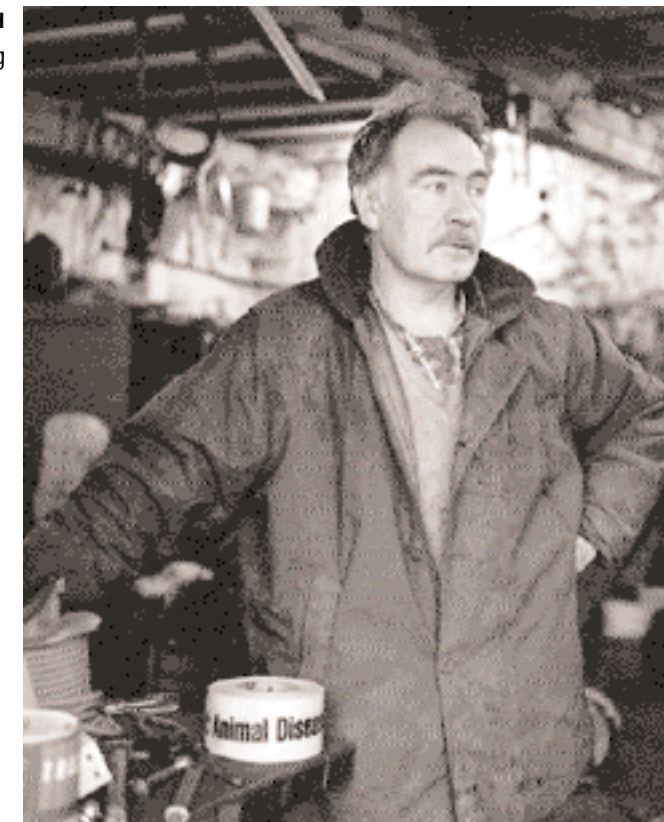


REDUNDANT FARM BUILDINGS, LINCOLNSHIRE
© Wanda Sooby



OLD JOE, AGED 87 © Marilyn Hardman
Struggling to continue farming.

QUARANTINED BY FOOT-AND-MOUTH
© Ian Geering



TRADITIONAL HAYMAKING
© Brian Jordan



MILKING PARLOUR
© Ian Geering



increasingly resemble the industrial wasteland that has enveloped much of the United States, where topsoil is being lost faster than it can be replenished, and where the only species that prosper are monocrops and the pests that eat them.

For consumers it means an increasingly distant agricultural system. Their only connection with the produce they eat will be the safety assurances of anonymous bureaucracies. For the environment, it means heightened dependence on fossil fuels – the prime cause of climate change – with basic foods being flown thousands of miles from field to plate.

Britain's reliance on an increasingly volatile global economy will be exaggerated still further. Come wind or high water, we will have to be able to access basic food from foreign lands for more than 60 million people on a daily basis. It means that the global trading system cannot falter, even for a while. And as we pave over the last of the greenbelt, as we replace priceless local knowledge and technical know-how acquired over generations, it's going to be harder and harder to turn back.

But thankfully, as we know, trends rarely continue indefinitely. People don't want nuclear-irradiated food shuttled in from the other side of the world. People don't want a ghost-town Britain. They don't want farmers to become plumbers or computer technicians, as Lord Haskins suggested, even if it