

## Liz's Green Fingers

Every year after shearing the ewes, we have to re-mark them. This involves using special paint to make a line on their backs in a colour, and in a place, that marks them as ours. This usually done at the same time as we worm them and do several other jobs, so this year Liz was in charge of marking. She had been instructed on how to apply our (green) paint by Andy, but, alas, two hundred ewes later Liz was pretty well covered in the stuff, while the ewes seemed largely untouched. Well, at least everyone will know who she belongs to now.

Another skill that Liz has acquired this year is that of turning sheep. As we bring the sheep out of the farm to take them up the road, she stands at the gate and **holds them back** until we are ready. When we are ready, she lets them go, and changes to **turning them out** onto the road. When we get to the field, she then **turns them in** back off the road. Here are three photos of Liz demonstrating her mastery of the subtle differences between these three operations.



“Holding Back”



“Turning Out”



“Turning In”

## A Most Useful Book

Every year, from about November on, next years diaries start pouring through the letter box, and this year I have the ultimate diary, the one you will all covet, the one that will have you drooling, the one that would

make all your friends green with envy, the one that has all those absolutely vital pieces of information gathered in one place.

Yes, it is the National Farmers Union Members Diary for 2000.

How can you manage without fundamental pieces of information like the gestation periods for most farm animals.

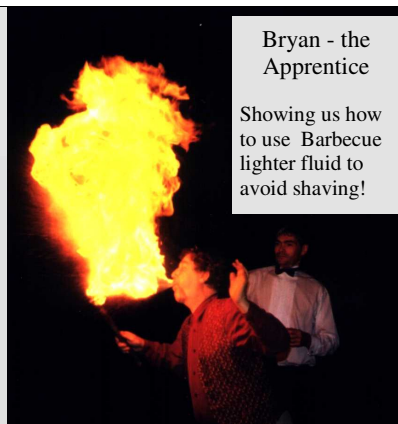
How enriched would your life be if you could tell the age of an animal by it's incisor teeth. How your friends would envy your ability to repeat from memory calculations for the contents of silage pits. And no self-respecting individual could manage without knowing backwards his fertilizer storage requirements by volume.

Yes it is all here, and it is all yours for the paltry sum of £34.50

## The Millenium Bash

How did your millennium go? We had a great time. We were all prepared with loads of bottled water, a five kilowatt diesel generator, loads of beer, and some stout sticks to fight off all the townies who were going to come marauding when it all went phut at midnight. What a non-event.

The party, however, was a great success with a marvelous display of fire breathing (outside the front door) by Tago and Bryan - see the photographs. Thanks to all who came and made it such a memorable new year, and commiserations to our friends in France who were unable to make it because their roof had been blown off in the big storm.



Bryan - the Apprentice

Showing us how to use Barbecue lighter fluid to avoid shaving!



Tago - the Master

This is what Barbecue lighter fluid is really for!

## Help Wanted

Come the summer, there will be a large number of jobs to be done around the farm. There are sheds to empty, muck to spread, fence posts to be knocked in (with a post knocker – not by hand), fences to be erected, concrete to be laid, fallen trees to be cut down, and cut up – the usual crop of summer jobs. We are behind with all this because of the administrative overload imposed by this years mega-holiday, so anybody who fancies an activity weekend should give us a call. We can certainly use you. Oh, yes, and we will be glad of your company as well!

## Bogged Down

(Continued from page 3)

however, were not to be comforted, and had to be taken indoors to a hot bath, with Mum, while all the clothes were washed

and dried. Finally, all was well, if a little subdued, but whenever the farm is now mentioned, there is a distinct lack of enthusiasm. I do hope that they are not marked for life, but I suspect that they will never be able to look at a green field or a sheep again!

## Sneaky Trick of the Year

Last year in early December, Andy dropped a bale of straw off the digger and broke one of the front light clusters, but didn't tell me about it until after the

newsletter went out. Trying to keep such stories out of the press rarely works. In my experience, (and that is plentiful), your breakages will always find you

Christmas 2000

## A date for the Diary.

August Bank Holiday Weekend (25th to 27th August) is the date of the

**Knowle Farm Barbeque and Barn Dance.**

Book your

## Promotions

A big promotion came my way this year. When we got back from holiday in January, Andy had been sorting out the lambs for market on his own, and he was overheard to admit that the job was easier when I was there! Two promotions in as many years (from *Getting in the Way* to *Not Actually Getting in the Way* but *B\*\*\*\*\* Useless*, and from there to *Slightly Helpful*). I really think I may have a career ahead of me in this industry. The sky is the limit. “We can't do this without Terry”, however, is likely to remain a dream.

Liz isn't really ready for promotion yet (but see the big lambing story above) as she is still at the collecting brownie points stage! She earned several points this year. The first lot were for going in with Andy's cows. Liz is quite happy with sheep, but she has always felt that cows are in a different league size-wise, so just

## Meet the Family

Andy and Jo have a new addition to the family (not counting 438 lambs, and 4 chickens). Grace Elizabeth Bowler was born on March 8th and has grown into a bouncing baby girl. She arrived

# The Knowle Farm Colour Supplement

## Liz's First Solo

Before lambing started this year, Liz decided that she wanted to go on a lambing course. The local agricultural college ran them, but only in September, long after it was needed. (Presumably because in April when the course **was** needed, everyone who was capable of teaching it was actually lambing themselves!). After much searching on the internet (thoroughly modern farmers in Hazelwood) Liz came up with a course in Dumfries just North of Glasgow, and off she went.

As she excitedly reported her doings when she got back, it seemed to involve a lot of fiddling around with barrels full of warm water, polythene bags, and dead lambs, but she said it had been very useful, and was ready straighten Andy out the second he started going wrong!

When lambing actually started she was itching to get going, hopping from metaphorical foot to metaphorical foot, but nothing suitable came up – until 14:32 on Monday the 17th of April.

The scene – one of our ewes was struggling and had been “at



it” (as we farmers say), for a couple of hours. Long enough. Andy was away doing other farmerly things so our Liz went in on her own.

Half an hour later we had a lighter mum, two wonderful lambs, and a deeply chuffed Liz. All her own work. (Well mostly her own work, mum had done a bit of pushing). And here are the results – Mum, babies, and proud

midwife.

Later on we had another very difficult ewe, and Andy was busy calving a cow, so we were seriously on our own. That got very messy. **I** got stuck into the damp bits. Very unpleasant. The details are best glossed over very quickly, but the end result was similar – one mum, two lambs and **two** very proud midwives.

being in the same shed with them was cause for celebration.

The second lot of points was earned for actually holding the cows back (see pictures on page 4) while I put another bale of hay in for them. In case this sounds as if I am trivialising Liz's role, you need to remember that I am sitting in the digger, while Liz is actually out there amongst them. A major step forward has undoubtedly been made.



just after his flock had started lambing, (see *A Tup in Time* page 3) and so naturally he stayed in the caravan in our shed until she was sleeping through the night!

We are VERY proud to have been appointed god parents and are taking our duties extremely seriously.



<div>Alarums &amp; Excursions</div>			
<div>Liz Loses Back End</div>		<div>For this lambing we acquired a quad bike with a stock trailer, which made shifting ewes and lambs about an awful lot easier. Because the weather was very mild at one point, our ewes were let into the field each day, which cut down on feed and bedding costs, as well as giving them more room. It did mean, however, that now and then we had to go round and see if any were lambing, or had lambed. When we needed to get one in, out we went with bike and trailer, and in they all came. A doddle. So much of a doddle that we were able to let Liz do it. Off she would go, up the hill, park by the new or expectant mum, shoo the family into the trailer, and back down again.</div>	<div>Eleven thirty at night, just snuggling down to read that same paragraph again before drifting off to sleep. All is well with the world at the end of another idyllic day down on the farm. Then <b>BAAAA</b>. And again <b>BAAAA</b>. Too close. You try to convince yourself that it is just the sheep over the road making more noise than usual, but in your heart you know that you are kidding yourself - the sheep are out again. So up the two of you get, both grumbling that it must be the other one’s fault, because you never leave gates open, and even if you did the sheep would never find it, and even if they did, the yard is still closed up, and it was probably the gardener, anyway. But when you actually go out, you find that Terry had indeed left a gate just the weensiest bit ajar, not enough for a mouse to squirm through really, but the ewes, dear, sweet, lovely little things that they are, had wormed their way through.</div>
<div>Familiarity, however, started to breed what it tends to. Off she went on this one trip, got to the top of the hill, got off to open the trailer, and it wasn’t there. It had dropped off. (How could you fail to notice a trailer dropping of the back of a quad bike? It weighs nearly as much as the bike!) Anyway, Liz was a little embarrassed about this so snuck back down the hill to find it, and get it all connected again before anyone noticed. She found the trailer just inside the field by the gate and was struggling (without much success) to get it back on when Andy’s voice pops up with “can I do that for you”, and the whole sorry tale had to come out.</div>		<div>After about ten minutes of chasing over the front lawn in your pyjamas (should you ever see a farmer running round a field in his pyjamas, this will be what he is doing) the sheep are safely back in the fold, and this time the gate is really shut. SWMCBOATP* has shut it. So you stumble back up the yard cursing anything with four legs, certain things with two legs, gates in general, gates that don’t close when you shut them in particular, farms in general, farms with animals on them in particular, and your thoughts turn gently towards a lovely warm bed, a bed that is growing lovelier, and warmer, by the second. But the back door is locked. And you can't find the key.</div>	
<div>Lesson Gets Rammed Home</div>		<div>So you go through the whole thing again. It wasn’t me, it must have been you who locked the</div>	<div>door, where did you put the key, etc, etc, and, as you can imagine, this is beginning to get just a little bit sharp by now!. Eventually it turns out that he who didn’t shut the gate in the first place, was also responsible for locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket. Unfortunately, the pocket in which he put the key has a hole. He tries vainly to shift the blame by suggesting that certain parties to the discussion have responsibilities towards trousers that have holes in the pockets but receives very short shrift.</div>
		<div>So at about midnight, trying vainly to ignore comments from your wife (you know she is yours because she is still painted green - see <b>Liz’s Green Fingers</b> on page 4) you start trying to remember everywhere you chased a sheep in the last half hour, because, at this point, the only other way back to your lovely warm bed is by breaking in. (This situation is a useful lesson in establishing how secure your home is. Where would you go for if you had to break in? Would you go for minimum noise? Minimum repair</div>	
<div>Another Lesson Lambed Home</div>		<div>drop twixt shed and field, so I went and got a dog lead. I immediately discovered one major difference between dogs and lambs - a dog will head off in the direction he wants to go, and will continue to go in that direction. A sheep will simply run away from you. And that could mean any, or all, points of the compass! So I was working my way down the drive, constantly trying to maneuver myself so that the lamb was between me and where I wanted to go. It was a slow, laborious process, and I finished up simply dragging the poor thing across the road.</div>	
		<div>As we went into the field, he tugged so hard that I fell over and cracked my knee on a stone, and with my attention half on my knee, I tried to release him. He, however, just wanted to get away from me, a sort of tussle cum chase ensued, during which I finally managed to get the lead off.</div>	
		<div>At shearing time, everybody came in, but we only identified one of Eric’s lambs, so we penned him up separately, and carried on shearing. Later I the afternoon, things quietened down so I decided to take this lamb back over the road. Now, this is a very squiggley lamb, getting big and heavy, and all too easy to</div>	
		<div>cost? Minimum danger? (At this point <b>my</b> mind was on minimum repercussions!). And, having made your own ingress, how would you get your wife / partner / friend / cat / dog in?). It wasn’t something I wanted to contemplate, so we started to play hunt the key. When I say play, of course, I use the word in it’s loosest possible sense.</div>	
		<div>Well, I can tell you now, I have shoveled it, spread it, emptied sheds of it, packed it in bags, cleaned it off my boots, washed it off various vehicles, cut it off ewes bottoms, wiped it off lambs bottoms, but never, ever, have I <b>examined</b> it quite so closely as I did that night. We were extremely lucky, and after about 15 minutes Liz spotted my key, so we got back to bed, but I was not her best hubby for a day or two, I can tell you. And I had to explain to the gardener why his lawn had several new little holes in it.</div>	
		<div>*SWMCBOATP – she who must <u>certainly</u> be obeyed at this point – with thanks to Rumpole.</div>	
		<div>The family arrived to look over the farm. Very smart Mum, daughter Victoria, and two sons Christopher and Oliver. The two boys couldn’t wait to sit in tractors, climb hay stacks, generally do boy things, and have a wonderful time. Victoria, being a girl who tends towards girly things (is that remark illegal?) preferred to look at the animals, so off we went to see the sheep. At the announcement of the intended destination, the two boys abandoned their mechanical toys, and shot off at full tilt down the yard.</div>	
		<div>Down the yard, out of the gate into the duck pond field, and as I shouted “watch out for the bog”, Oliver ran straight into it. He ran in like a TGV at full tilt, and</div>	
		<div>when his wellies stuck fast, he ran a further full three paces before coming to a shocked halt himself. He wasn’t sure what to do, but with cold dirty feet, and the surprise, it clearly wasn’t going to be too long before a long loud yell, or maybe several, ensued. To head this off, Mum ran in to get him. Mum also left her boots behind, but she sat down as well. Mum was now non-plussed, but managed to get to her feet, also looking as if she might burst into tears.</div>	
		<div>Victoria, upset at seeing mummy all covered in mud, and not looking at all her usual self, promptly burst into tears, and failing to keep up with what was going on around him, Christopher stood there looking totally bewildered.</div>	
<div>Daggings</div>		<div>the lamb, round its bottom, that get sheared off just before it goes to market. (If you have ever heard a sheep with very dry daggings running up a field, you will know the meaning of the Australian expression “rattle your dags” meaning “get a move on”).</div>	
<div>We have a friend, Bryan (yes – he of the round-the-world trip) who is a very keen vegetable gardener. Yes, he knows his onions, but more particularly, he knows his runner beans. Runner beans need to be planted in something which will retain moisture, torn up newspaper typically being used for this purpose. This year, however, the marketing department at Knowle Farm had a brainwave. Daggings.</div>		<div>The beauty of this solution from the gardener’s viewpoint is that it combines, in one cheap and easy to apply dose, both the required moisture retention (the wool), and, as a bonus, a slow release fertilizer (the other bits).</div>	
<div>Daggings is the name given to those less-than-attractive bits of</div>		<div>Bryan (being a science teacher of some renown) carried out a controlled experiment. He grew</div>	
		<div>Sydney Olympic Arts Festival. Though I am not a great lover of Mahler, the whole thing was marvelous. Then home, now five of us with Jon and Mary, via the Great Barrier Reef, Bali, Singapore and The Taj Mahal in Delhi. What a trip.</div>	
		<div>While we were away, we had assorted friends and relatives house sitting for us, and getting a free holiday for them. The free holidays were not without incident.</div>	
		<div>My cousin fell off a hay stack on his first day and either broke his arm or bent it so badly he was off</div>	
		<div>work for two months!</div>	
		<div>It being harvesting time, several visitors had to set mouse traps. Unfortunately, the last lot to set them didn’t tell us where they were, so we have now lost them and will probably only find them again several weeks after they catch something. (Either that, or they pinched them!)</div>	
		<div>We had an ant infestation, and, probably worst, a weevil infestation from the seed we feed to the birds, which had remained, untouched, in one of the kitchen cupboards. When they finally were discovered they were all over the cupboard, all over the wall, behind the freezer, everywhere. (Actually, I was quite glad that we missed that!)</div>	
		<div>Probably the funniest was the</div>	
		<div>couple who, upon trying to use the breadmaker, discovered that the paddle at the bottom, used to kneed the dough, was missing.</div>	
		<div>They spent some time diligently tracking down a new one in Derby, and, having found one, and successfully made a loaf that night, were greeted by the postman the next day with a parcel containing the original. The previous family had baked a loaf to take home, and discovered the paddle in the loaf when they came to eat it.</div>	
		<div>Still, thanks to everyone for looking after the place, we hope you enjoyed it, and, in the unlikely event of us ever feeling like we would like to get in an aeroplane again, we might see if any of you would like another free week or two in South</div>	
		<div>What actually happened was that Liz and I had a weekend away at the start of March (intended to be the last bit of calm before the storm), and when we returned on the Sunday afternoon, we found Andy up to his arm pits in lambs, with several more on the way, not knowing what to do with them all, and not having had a rest for the entire weekend</div>	
		<div>In fact they went on lambing for an entire fortnight, and in the end fifty of them lambed early - <b><u>fifty</u></b>. No wonder the tup had a wide grin on his face, but could hardly stand up when Andy finally found him.</div>	
		<div>I say <b><i>almost</i></b> entirely because he was only in there for three days according to Andy, so we were expecting a few ewes, half a dozen perhaps, to lamb a bit early.</div>	
		<div>Now, I was just starting to get a little worried, as it all seemed a bit serious, but fortunately, at this</div>	
		<div>point, Mum saw the funny side and started to laugh. The children, <i>(Continued on page 4)</i></div>	
		<div>story, requested a bag of daggings from us, and has since, quite independently, confirmed the original findings.</div>	
		<div>This leaves us in the position of having a world beater on our hands and not knowing what to do with it. I have considered setting up poo.com, daggings.co.uk and various others, but I can’t seem to get the venture capital. Any help, financial or otherwise, would be appreciated. (Andy has always said that if we could find a way to sell poo we would all be very rich!)</div>	
		<div>In an interesting post script, a friend of ours who had, unbeknownst to us, seen this</div>	