

Easton Village Newsletter

May 2022

Issue 199

Farmer Burton's Country Talk



Wow, where do I begin? Like many businesses we are all feeling the effects of Covid, Brexit and now the war in Ukraine. Farming inflation figures have leapt up by 23% in the last 6 months.

Fertiliser, which I need to grow my crops, has gone mad! Last year I paid £295 per ton for Nitrogen which was £100/t more than the previous year. For any farmers buying in April

this year, it reached £1000/t! This is because most of it was manufactured in Ukraine, with a small amount in the UK but this stopped when gas prices went too high to make it. Some may ask why we need to use artificial Nitrogen. All our crops need Nitrogen to grow to their potential, wheat, barley, oilseed rape and even wild bird covers (but not field beans, these can fix Nitrogen into the soil thanks to a canny relationship with rhizobia bacteria that form nodules on the plant roots to secure Nitrogen, that readily absorb themselves). And who just expected a biology lesson??

Growing beans, and clover, will leave a small amount of Nitrogen in the soil after they have been harvested, but it is only a relatively small amount and we can't grow beans continually on the farm because they can only be grown in a crop rotation of 1 year in 5. Also, there isn't a huge demand for them, beans are exported for human consumption in North Africa or used for animal feed.

Despite increases in input costs, the upside is that the market for grain is strong because of supply issues. It may cost more to produce food this year but the rewards, assuming that we get a good harvest, should go some way to addressing the shortfall. Prices in the shops will be affected with milk prices rising and limited egg production (with many producers struggling with Bird Flu, lockdowns and feeds costs). Pig farmers are said to be losing £50 per pig and have called for urgent support from the Government.

As you may be aware Ukraine and Russia are major producers and exporters of wheat, grains and sunflower oil, with some manufacturers saying that food will be impacted on like crisps, biscuits, cakes and some ready meals to mention a few. And you thought it couldn't get any worse!

I now think more carefully before spreading gold dust (sorry Nitrogen!) to my crops, by applying smaller amounts more often so that the plant can take it up as it needs it and also only spreading Nitrogen when there is rain forecast to aid take up by the crop. That leads me onto my other slight worry! April is normally a month of sunshine and showers, but we really need a good spell of wet weather. I drilled my Spring beans a few weeks ago near the old railway bridge and they are struggling to germinate but the optimist in me realises that whenever I mention lack of rain in the newsletter, by the time it gets published, and delivered to you, we have had a downpour and I look an idiot!

The Muntjac – *Muntiacus*

Charles Nixon

It is a quiet, still night and the only disturbance is loud barking. No, it is not your neighbour's dog; it's a Muntjac. Sometimes known as the "Barking deer" this small mammal is common in South England and around the Village.



Said to have been introduced from China to the UK at Woburn Abbey in the 19th Century, they subsequently escaped and started to breed in the countryside. Since then, the species has become invasive and there are currently about 40,000 Muntjac deer in England out of a total deer population of 2 million.

The most common is the Reeves Muntjac, named after the Victorian naturalist John Reeves. He was born in Essex in 1771 and developed a knowledge of teas which got him

sent to China in 1812 for the British East India Company. A keen naturalist, he is credited with bringing Wisteria, the Muntjac, and a species of pheasant to the UK.

Reeves's Muntjac feeds on herbs, blossoms, succulent shoots, fungi, berries, grasses, and nuts. But they will also eat eggs and carrion. They are notorious browsers, eating brambles, the shoots from shrubs and the bark off trees – something you may well have spotted in your own garden!

The Muntjac is the smallest of the deer in the UK and grows to 0.5m high at the shoulder and 0.95m in length. It is reddish-brown in appearance with striped markings on its face. The belly is creamy-white, with lighter fur extending to the neck, chin, and the underside of the tail. The males have short antlers and long upper canines (tusks), usually about 5cm long.

You can often see the footprints of the Muntjac in the mud and snow, and there is a well-used trail in the grass running from St Peter's Churchyard across Church Road and over the brook into the central field. They bark at night to mark out their territory (they are at the top off their food chain so do not need to rely on stealth) and they also bark

to make contact with their offspring and other Muntjacs. Several years ago, we were startled by a screaming sound in the garden. On investigation we found a young muntjac (about the size and shape of a piglet) with its head stuck in some chicken wire between the churchyard and the garden. It was screeching and nearby we could hear the mother barking. Whilst Melissa held the youngster's head, I prised away the wire. As soon as it was free it bounded away across the churchyard. That afternoon and well into the night we could hear two sets of barking as the mother and the fawn tried to locate each other. I am glad to say they did and we often saw "Morris", as we named him, again.



Save The Children Appeal

Stephanie Silcock

As Usual at this time of year, *Save The Children* have their annual appeal and the Kimbolton Branch arrange collections around the local villages. Unfortunately, owing to Covid guidelines, house-to-house collections are not now considered advisable. However, SCF does have a "JustGiving" page and it is suggested that if anyone would like to give in this way, it would be very much appreciated. The address is:

www.justgiving.com/team/SavetheChildren-KimboltonandDistrict.

Easton has always been very generous in supporting this cause and sadly, the need is even greater at present. Alternatively, I am happy to pass on any cheques (which can be made out to Save the Children) to the Branch, if these could please be posted through my letter box at Crown Cottage (next to the postbox) in a marked envelope. Thank you.

King Cups

Margaret Halliday

No-one can have failed to see the bright yellow flowers lining the edge of the stream along by the church. There is a romantic legend that these flowers were for long only



known in Europe in the ponds of the Vatican where the Pope refused to let them go into a heretical world. They are called "king-cups" We lived for many years in the Netherlands with a canal at the bottom of the garden where these lovely flowers grew along the water. I missed them so much when we came to live in Easton that I brought one plant back to grow in our garden here. Note - only one king-cup plant. That

was 20 years ago. Look at them now. It just shows that if a plant loves a place it will flourish. As indeed it has done.

Easton Parish Council - Annual General Meeting

The accounts for the Easton Parish Council are to be presented at the Annual General Meeting to be held on 19th May 2022 and all members of the parish are welcome. The Returning Officer for the Huntingdonshire District Council has advised the forthcoming Parish Election is uncontested and the following persons are therefore duly elected as Parish Councillors for Easton.

BAKER Michael George

BELL Pamela Ann

BURTON Richard Philip

THOMASON Stephen Kenneth

WOOD Clive Richard

Upcoming Easton Social Events in May

Saturday 14th May 9-30-11-00 am The Big Breakfast St Peter's Church

Saturday 14th May 7.30 pm 24th Annual PCC Quiz St Peter's Church

Tickets for Quiz -£7.00, school children £3 in advance or on the door. Fish and Chip supper available to buy. Please bring your own drinks and glasses.

Church services in May

Sunday 8th May

Easton 9.30 am

Parish Communion

Sunday 22nd May

Easton 9,30 am

Morning Worship

For more local services go to the following website:

<https://www.kymchurch.org.uk/wp2/index.php/church-services>

Deadline for May's Newsletter is May 25th