

DAC News

DERBYSHIRE AGRICULTURAL
CHAPLAINCY NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 2019

Rural Action
DERBYSHIRE



The **Methodist** Church



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Contact DAC on 07710 088972

Hello from Alan!

The DAC newsletter includes a range of articles which we hope will celebrate the contribution of farming in Derbyshire and be some help and encouragement. Please get in touch with any thoughts or comments, or if you would like to contribute in the future, we would love to hear from you on 07710 088972.



We send the newsletter to over 1000 farms; however, it would be great to make the most of each copy by passing it on to someone you think might enjoy reading it. Thank you to all our contributors in this issue. The next issue will be in June 2020. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Carol Service and Fatstock on 1st December at 2.30pm at the ABC. (All views and opinions in articles are those of the authors)

Christmas Message from Rev'd Stella Mills (Agricultural Chaplain)

At the end of October, we held the Harvest Festival in the Store Ring at Bakewell Market and what a joyous occasion it was to see so many folk gathered in spite of flooded roads. Indeed, the journey through the town to avoid the road closure into the Agricultural Centre did not deter those attending who all joined in the Thanksgiving to God with enthusiasm and gratitude.

The beautiful autumn colours have given way to darker evenings and shorter days for the essential work on the farm. Winter is a time of waiting: the tups have been put to the ewes and the fields have been ploughed and sown with winter grain and we await the Spring for the results of these tasks bringing new life both to our animals and fields.

But winter also brings Christmas, that time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. No doubt, the children or grandchildren will demand our presence at nativity plays or other celebrations of the winter season. We shall sing the usual carols and probably eat too much as we do minimal work on the farm, especially on Christmas Day itself. But the Christmas story is not just for children – a sort of fairy tale to act out in a farm stable, complete with animals and straw. The Baby who was born 2,000 years ago is alive today and lives in the hearts of those who will accept his presence in their lives.

For the baby grew into a man and lived our life and died our death, not in a hospital or home but on a cross, the lowest form of capital punishment the Romans knew. But Christians believe that this was not the end for there have been spiritual experiences of folk being called to follow Jesus down the ages and they are still happening today. When we reach out to God in Christ, we find the peace of which the angels sang and the warming of our hearts as God's love in Jesus supports and cares for us. So, this Christmas let us make room and time for Jesus and as January heralds the start of another year, let us journey on with the Christ Child; we shall not be disappointed.

On behalf of everyone connected with the Derbyshire Agricultural Chaplaincy, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a productive 2020.



Rev'd Stella Mills

Farmers Can't Retire! Or Can They?

Like most of you, I'm a proud man, I work hard, and loved being a Farmer with a passion, so why would I now start thinking of retiring, because we all know that - "Farmers don't retire, they just die". That's all well and good, but life has a funny way of throwing you a curved ball and that's what happened really.

My son is a personal trainer (so not a farmer) and although it was lovely to see him do some of his training sessions in our Barn, time moves on and so did his location. Then other things started to happen, silly accidents became more frequent and sometimes more alarming and that's when the question "Farmers can't retire... or can they?" started to crop up more and more frequently.

This certainly wasn't an instant decision, more of an itch that I kept scratching because it wouldn't go away. So I had to make a decision. Completely ignore it and carry on as normal with the aches, pains, tiredness and a lot of plasters in the tractor! OR... Consider what life would be like without the farm and what on earth I would do with the time which had once been taken up with farming.

If I "retired", what would I do?, Where would I go? Could I find other interests that weren't all connected with farming? Would I be bored? Would I lose the connection I had with people in the farming community? All great questions I thought, whilst I bounced around in my tractor, but ones that slowly started getting answers.

I could start visiting some of the amazing places I didn't even know existed. I could join English Heritage and National Trust, I could stay in the area that I'd proudly farmed for the last 35 years, or move nearer to my son.

I figured out the “what would I do” bit would come – and it did. A casual conversation that led me to the role of volunteering with the Derbyshire Agricultural Chaplaincy, helping the people who needed it in the farming environment. Volunteering with the DAC has brought new friends and acquaintances into my life and allowed me to keep my finger on the pulse of farming.

So, in truth, I now no longer have to worry about paperwork, red-tape, cold days and nights and to be honest, it did feel a bit like stepping off a cliff edge into the unknown. I look forward to finding out what other things I can do, which I now know will come along (when the time is right) and have learnt to relax more and enjoy time. My life is calmer, I sleep better, I'm far more relaxed and although it was most probably the most scary thought that has ever entered into my head... “Is there life after retirement”? Oh, heck, YES THERE IS! And I'd be more than happy to talk to you about it.



John Eley

Did you know that we help run two **rural social groups** with the Farming Life Centre at Bamford and Boylestone...if you want to know more about these and other groups please contact Rev'd Stella Mills on 01283 820110 or Rachel Metcalfe on 01629 810903

Editor's note: Of course not all farmers fully retire but planning for the future is important. For example, if you're a tenant farmer, there is an excellent housing scheme provided by the Addington Fund in the event that finances might not stretch to finding a home after farming. The Derbyshire Agricultural Chaplaincy recognises that it's important to find the right way forward for each individual farm, so if you would like to speak to John or the chaplaincy team in confidence feel free to get in touch on 07710 088972.

Contact DAC on 07710 088972

What Will Happen to Your Farm if You Die?

Have you made a Will? Have you even thought about planning for the future? Recent surveys have shown that 60% of farmers have not made wills, and that succession planning, or lack of it, is a significant issue and a major worry for farming families.

The face of British agriculture has changed tremendously over the last 20 years. Falling farm income, increased compliance and the need to diversify have change the nature of farming businesses.

If you do not make a Will, your spouse will not automatically inherit all of your property after your death. It will be divided according to the rules of intestacy. These rules are rigid and may mean that the farm business could be divided between a number of relatives. This can cause disputes within families and the possible break up of the farm business. The absence of a Will can also result in a delay in the payment of money due to the farm business, including subsidies, pending a legal decision about who is entitled to receive such payments. When you make a Will you can make sure that the assets of the farm, which may include not only land but also livestock, plant and machinery, milk quota, and other entitlements, are passing to the person you intend.

A classic problem in farming families is how to provide for the children when one is involved in the farming business and the others are not. Treating farming and non-farming children fairly does not necessarily mean equally. However it is important to start addressing this issue and make sure that the non –farming children know what you are planning. Another issue is Inheritance Tax. In general terms tax planning for farmers used to be relatively straightforward.

The land qualified for Inheritance Tax agricultural property relief and the business qualified for business property relief, both at 100 per cent. Tax planning used to be simple – keep the farm and business until death, leave it to the children and rely on the availability of inheritance Tax reliefs.

HMRC are now more rigorous in the application and availability of agricultural and business property reliefs. There tends to be more emphasis on making the best use of tax reliefs and passing assets down to the next generation at an early stage. The result of these changes is that the emphasis is now on putting in place lifetime structures to help succession planning rather than simply relying on inheriting through a will.

Avoid unnecessary disputes and delays by making a Will, and start planning for the future now. Solicitors can help you with drawing up your Will and can advise on your situation.

*Lesley Middleton Partner, Cooper sons Hartley & Williams solicitors
25 Market Street, Chapel-en-le-Frith, High Peak SK23 0HS
Tel 01298 812138 Website : www.cshw.co.uk heading*



Robotic Milking at Blackwell Hall Farm

My family has been farming at Blackwell Hall since 1896, a 250 acre farm near Taddington made up of flat pastures and steep ground dropping down into Millers Dale and Cheedale. Today my grandma (Christine), mum (Carole), dad (Les) and brother Andrew run the farm, Andrew being the 5th generation to do so. We currently milk 65 Friesians, have a flock of 150 sheep, small suckler herd and grow 32 acres of barley.

Cows have been milked on the farm nearly continuously since 1896 but, like on all farms, during that long period of time the way in which cows have been milked has altered many times. One of the biggest changes took place in the early 1970's when my Grandad, Bill, took the decision to modernise the farm and move out of milking in small old barns, building a 65 metre shed with enough space to tie up 122 cows and a loft to store 14,000 small bales.

The old pipeline system served us well and didn't owe us a penny but its time was up with spares almost impossible to find and the demands of modern dairy farming becoming too much for it. After much consultation and deliberating we decided to take the massive step to convert the existing shed into cubicle housing and to install a Lely robotic milker

On the 4th December 2018 we milked through the robot for the first time, and we haven't looked back since. The existing shed was completely emptied including the loft for a fresh start, with the wall down one side being taken out to make a feed barrier and allow better ventilation. The robot was then installed in the adjoining shed where again the walls have been taken out to allow the two sheds to run as one. The system is free access meaning the cows are not forced in any way to visit the robot, they are on their own time and decide when to be milked. Dairy nuts are given in the robot to encourage visits, and within two weeks of starting the cows were visiting an average of three times a day.

The cows have been allowed out to graze grass all summer, with access back to the shed and robot left open all day so they can come inside to be milked as they wish. Feed is also provided at the barrier throughout the day to encourage cows to keep coming back to the shed.

Since the robot was installed and the cows are on their own time it is clear to see they are quieter and a lot more relaxed compared to a conventional system. Milk has also increased by around 40% as a result of better housing, feed and being milked more regularly.

Only half the shed was converted last year, this summer we have converted the rest to give more housing room this winter. The last load of concrete was laid only yesterday, 21st September, a big relief for us all!



Robert Walker looks back as Chair of the Derbyshire Agricultural Chaplaincy Support Group

In the fourth chapter of Micah we are told that men will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation and we will not learn of war any more. In these troubled times we cannot be blamed for thinking that this prophecy is a long way from being fulfilled. Each time we switch our TV on there seem to be reports of terrible conflicts in many parts of the world. We can see whole cities flattened, people starving, thousands of refugees living in pitiful conditions. I expect that like me, you feel helpless and sadness for these people. Nearer home we have the appalling loss of life in young people to knife crime, more Christian teaching would surely reduce this terrible trend.

I think that we are so incredibly fortunate to live where we do, in our own little bubble (cocoon, world) and to be involved in agriculture, in my opinion the best job in the world, producing food for the nation. However, farming isn't without its problems, and there are always some farmers, often through no fault of their own, who need a little help and support. To this end we are extremely fortunate to have Rev Alan Griggs as our agricultural chaplain. It was through Graham Hinds that I became involved in the chaplaincy many years ago. I became a member of the support group initially chaired by a vicar, then Geoff Henshaw and then myself for about the last ten years. We meet four times each year. A lot of the time has been spent securing funding to keep the chaplaincy position going.

We like to have a couple of farmers, a Methodist and an Anglican minister. Someone rural from the NHS and someone from Rural Action Derbyshire. Personally, I feel very proud to have helped in a small way to sustain and grow the chaplaincy.

Alan and his growing chaplaincy team are there to support farmers suffering bereavement, mental stress, maybe through the stress of TB breakdowns, financial problems but most importantly can talk when the pressures are mounting.

On a lighter note, the chaplaincy supports the HPLS Harvest Festival and the Carol Service. My thanks to Bagshaws for supporting these two lovely services.

Editors note: The DAC would like to thank Robert Walker for his service as Chair of the DAC support group and to the farming community, and all his time and effort in coordinating the Harvest and Carol services at the Agricultural Business Centre in Bakewell.



Robert Walker

Wet weather!

After one of the driest and warmest years on record in 2018, we're heading for one of the wettest starts to the winter in 2019. Farmers are certainly on the front line when it comes to increasingly extreme weather events, and in this very wet weather, arable farmers are now experiencing a severe delay to drilling of winter cereals, and potato growers are weeks behind with harvesting.

Derbyshire and much of the North of England has been hit hard in recent weeks and very sadly, a life has been lost in Derbyshire and our thoughts go out the the family. If you or any farmers you know needs any support, please contact the organisations over the page.

Call Rev'd Alan Griggs for the **Derbyshire Agricultural Chaplaincy** on: 07710 088972, or call our **Chaplain to Young Farmers in Derbyshire**, Emily Brailsford on 07594 088858
Forage Aid supports farmers whose livestock has been affected by an extreme weather event. Call: 07967 219991
Farming Help is a collaboration between the Addington Fund, the Farming Community Network, R.A.B.I and can be reached by calling 03000 111999

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“She’ll Live” by Jackie Fee @NFU Mutual, Bakewell.

When I was a young girl we would visit my Grandad’s dairy farm in the north west of Ireland every summer. As a girl growing up in Birmingham we were like cows being let out to pasture in spring. Miles and miles (or it seemed like) of lush, green fields to explore. No cars or neighbours to worry about. The only thing we had to remember was to be back in time for tea.



Grandad used to keep a pig to fatten and we often used to ‘talk’ to the pig and it would ‘talk’ back to us. One day me and my siblings went to ‘talk’ to the pig, and as often is, there was a bit of pushing and shoving to get the best spot near the pig. The last thing I remember is falling into a slurry pit next to the pig sty. I remember screaming ‘quick sand, quick sand!’ and my Grandad rushing to the scene.

Thankfully, I was only up to it waist high and managed to touch the bottom of the pit and somehow scramble out. My lasting memory was being hosed down with freezing cold water, my mother in hysterics and my Grandad saying ‘she’ll live another day’.



Farms are dangerous. In 2018/2019 there was 39 fatalities in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain.

14 people killed when struck by a moving vehicle, 9 killed when injured by an animal, 2 killed by asphyxiation (incidents in a grain silo and water) this list goes on. We all have a tale to tell about farm safety (or lack of it).

It is so important to get your farm risk assessed and especially if you employ people or have children living on the farm. "Tragically a lot of accidents are caused by simple factors such as habit, haste, fatigue, and improperly maintained machinery" says Farm Safety Foundation's Stephanie Berkeley.

After recalling my 'slurry incident' I am even more determined to get the farmers of Derbyshire to come and talk to me about farm safety. We are known to be the insurance of choice for farmers but did you know we can help to make your farm safer to work in?

Please give me a call either at our Bakewell Office on 01629 812481 or come and see me every Monday down Bakewell Livestock Market and I will help you make your farm a safer and that's one thing less to worry about isn't it? And if you're lucky I might even tell you what my new nickname was after my slurry bath!

(Figures from HSE Official Statistics, and produced in compliance with the Code of Practice Statistics produced by the UK Statistics Authority)

Come and join us for a three course meal! at Ossie's Community Cafe, St Oswalds Church Centre, Ashbourne between 4pm and 6pm on 26th November, 17th December, 28th January, and then on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Contact Maggie or Nigel on 01335 664159 for more information. Suggested donations of £3 per adult and £1 per child



Contact DAC on 07710 088972

Nick Batelle from Old 20 Tractors

I feel that we are all so fortunate to be involved in our local rural economy which basically revolves around local farming life. What also pleases me is the fact so many people don't just dismiss Christian faith as a load of old humbug with no value at all and no place in today's racing and busy world. I write these words not as a farmer or church minister, just as a person who has found faith within the last 10 or so years and found so much more in the life that surrounds me.

My family practice religion on wheels, that is we are taken to be christened in a pram we are then taken to be married in a car and then finally we are taken in a much bigger car for a final journey, so family get togethers are always weddings and funerals. My wife is a life long member of the church which has meant that I have been involved, but at arms length. Some years ago, I became more closely involved, took an interest and ultimately was confirmed to be a member of the Ockbrook Moravian church close to where we live, slightly to the east of Derby.

I was invited to lead a service, without great knowledge, just enough confidence and blagging to get away with it! I thoroughly enjoyed it and the congregation must have also enjoyed it too as I have been asked back a number of times since. I also feel I am led in everything I do and consequently my knowledge has increased and I think my ability to lead a service has got better as well.

As I said before I am not a farmer. My background has been with tractors and 36 years ago my wife and I set up a business to sell parts for older tractors and haven't we seen some changes in that time!

The biggest change being the demise of old established agricultural businesses including Massey Ferguson dealers, the Burgess group and many more.

Our business has changed and developed in that time. More farming operations have needed our attention, staff have joined us from farming backgrounds and younger staff have also joined to help us battle through the world of electronics and technology.

We took office space at the new Bakewell Agricultural Centre when it opened and we are still there every Monday and see people who are more than just customers, in many cases they are now friends. Monday sees other non customer people arrive and these are retired people who travel from Macclesfield, a successful pigeon racing man no farming connection in either case but an interest and a hour or two of friendship and fellowship as well as a laugh and a joke usually at one another.

In recent time I am joined by a retired policeman who does have agricultural background and of course we are always able to spend time with Alan and Stella as they carry out they're chaplaincy duties around the market and both bring a smile and a moment of peace to our group.

In these days I am very grateful for the small happenings and brief time spent with nice people and very much feel my Christian faith guides me and enables me to do things in a better way and that can be at church or in business it is there with me all of the time and if you read this and want to say hello on a Monday feel free to come and have a chat we are tucked round by the NFU office opposite Bagshaws pay office.

Nick Battelle



Contact DAC on 07710 088972

Climate Change and Net Zero by NFU County Adviser Andrew Critchlow

Climate Change is probably the most common news theme after Brexit and like Brexit there is a temptation to switch off when we hear those words as we feel it is out of our hands. I think also because we have seen so much bad weather in our lives and had to work through it as farmers there is a sense of, is the climate really changing? True, we don't get as many bad winters as we used to up until the mid 1980's, but the summers do not seem to be hotter and dryer as predicted, except for the summer of 2018.

Having said all that we have to believe the science, there is change, the average global temperature is rising and sea levels are rising with it. Politicians are reacting to the science and to the active citizens that are demanding action. One of the fingers of blame has been pointed at agriculture, especially ruminant livestock which encompasses beef, lamb and dairy. Is this fair? Let's put it in perspective, of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions the whole of agriculture accounts for 10%, the biggest two culprits are energy supply at 24% and transport at 27%. Ruminant livestock are just 5% of that total.

The figures often quoted in the media of the impact of beef production are usually global averages; the UK is two and half times better than those. The average British cow gets 70% of its food from grass with another 17% coming from other silage crops. That only leaves 13% from 'concentrates' and nearly half of those are made up of crop residues or human food bi-products.



Two thirds of the UK is only suitable for growing grass and we do it well, the UK and Ireland are the best in Europe. Grassland soils are an important carbon store and to plough that up for other uses would release vast amounts of carbon. Cattle and sheep turn grass, a crop that humans don't thrive on, into nutritious, healthy food which has low food miles and does not need much processing especially if purchased locally.



Andrew Critchlow

That does not mean we can be smug, we can make improvements and we will have to as tackling climate change is a shared responsibility by all. To this end the NFU has published its Net Zero by 2040 for agriculture, which is 10 years ahead of the government's target for all the UK emissions.

Achieving Net Zero will have three main approaches: **Firstly**, through improving farming efficiency. This will include precision farming to reduce inputs, feed additives to reduce methane emissions and a wide range of methods to reduce electricity and fuel consumption.

Secondly, farmland carbon storage through more and larger hedges, more trees and woodland and techniques to increase the amount of carbon stored in soils. **Thirdly**, greater use of bio-energy that use crops, plant based materials in construction –such as the use of hemp in concrete and land based renewable energy systems such as solar and wind. To produce the majority of food for a UK population of over 70 million as well as being Net Zero will be a brilliant achievement. Almost no other sector of the economy has the ability to be Net Zero.

Bev Parker....Rural Action Derbyshire's CEO and Farmer

I've always led a bit of a double life. I have my professional life and put on a suit and network with people in business or in the public sector. And I have my other life, which involves wearing wellies, mucking out horses and shepherding duties.



Bev and her Long Horn's!

When the two worlds collide, I find myself picking bits of hay out of my hair and sitting on my hands in meetings because I have been unable to scrub the blue spray off my hands or get the muck from under my fingernails!! I have worked for RAD for over 5 years, and its CEO for just over 2 years. For me it's the first time that both sides of my life have been able to cross over, and I have enjoyed attending events such as Ashover Show or Brailsford Ploughing Match as part of my working day and meeting people with whom I have something in common. When I became CEO I made it my mission to put the "rural" back into Rural Action Derbyshire as I felt that the charity had lost some of the rural focus over the years. At RAD we believe that no-one should be disadvantaged because they live in a rural area which is why the work of Alan and his team of agricultural chaplains is so important. We know the pressures and challenges of living in a rural area. For many it is a way of life and they can't imagine having to uproot themselves and move to a town or city for affordable housing, or a better paid job, or because they need more care for themselves or a family member.

As a part-time farmer myself I understand the pressures facing the farming community. My partner, Ian, and I are tenant farmers in Staffordshire, renting about 100 acres producing hay and haylage mostly for horses and we run a flock of around 60 Jacob ewes. We also have two longhorn cows with calves at foot and their previous offspring, which will be finished for beef boxes. We both work full time, so haymaking and lambing must be fitted in around our other commitments. I once had to leave a telephone conference call which I took in the lambing shed to sort out a muddle of twins both trying to come out together. When I rejoined the call, the participants were most keen to know that I'd washed my hands! Good job it wasn't a video call.

Most non-farming people seem to get a bit queasy when you put your hands inside a ewe and pull out a lamb! Just a quick glance at today's Farmers Guardian shows the scale of issues affecting the farming community, from lack of affordable housing for both young and old, mental health issues and the collapse of yet another dairy producer. But there are positives too, an inspiring story of a young woman disabled following a car accident but setting up a successful sheep enterprise. And hope, as young farmers talk of their aspirations and dreams.

But what of the future in farming? With the endless political debate, involvement of lobby group and fierce words around issues such as climate change, veganism and rewilding it can be hard to have faith in a sustainable future for farming. But at the end of the day people need feeding, the countryside needs to be cared for and there will always be a role for people on the land. We have to take inspiration where we can. I have a coaster on my desk at home which includes the following lyric from Lilly Allen's song "Smile". It always makes me feel more positive. **"I found the light in the tunnel at the end"**