

through to the front to see the kill at the feet of the hunters, took one look and said for all to hear, "it's not as big as the one you shot last week is it Dad?" Amen

I have heard in the Bush Telegraph that the Goxhill Lifestylers 2008, Kelly, Alison, Katie and Amy have carried out a Wildlife Project by making Insect, Bat and Bird Boxes and have placed them around the village with 50-plus nest boxes in the wilds of the Marsh, a project that has been needed for many years. It will give the hole nesting birds a place to sleep in the winter and nest in the springtime without returning to the village, the only place where nesting boxes are situated, for there are almost no hollow trees left in the wilds.

For the past two centuries the Wood Pigeon, Rabbit and an occasional Hare were for the poor man's table, the Ducks, Geese and Hares belonged to the Middle-Class table and the Game Birds, Pheasants, Partridge and Grouse adorned the tables of the rich. This was the case until the rationing of World War Two ended around 1950 and the prosperity which got better during the war for the working-class enabled them to afford better things for the table. These countryside products began to decline for two reasons: first, in the kitchen because they took up so much time preparing them for the oven such as plucking, drawing or skinning them, and the oven-ready meals at supermarkets became available which saved the time and mess in the kitchen. Cheap meals of pigeon or rabbit have never stopped being available but the sales are slow. A few years after rationing ended, new legalisation began to protect the endangered species and continued to increase until almost every bird has some sort of protection, even the ones regarded as vermin. During the times of rationing a wild rabbit or a pigeon pie made a delicious change

of wartime meat, Mutton was known as Jump-Dyke for it was old and tough, while the Beef was known as Cow Beef, tough enough to sole one's boots with, best put through the mincing machine first. Today the countryside is full of these would be dinners for all classes, The younger generation will no-doubt say "Never" but I can assure them that an empty stomach has no scruples; I sometimes vaguely wonder if the recession looming on the horizon will bring back these birds and rabbits to the pot. Today Nature's Larder has more stock than it has had for over half a century.

For the last two centuries Estate and Land owners helped the pheasant population to increase by employing Gamekeepers to artificially rear some birds and protect the wild ones to give the aristocrats, their associates and the rich the sport of shooting at an expense. During the period between the wars in the last century in a recession, with rural workers wages at approximately 25 shillings (£1.25 today) per week, gamekeepers included, there was a Saying on Shooting Days "Up gets a Pound, Off goes a Penny and down comes Half a Crown" that is if the shooter hit the bird; Definition - it cost a pound to rear a pheasant and drive it with bush beaters (Men with sticks frightening the birds) over the Shooters, Cartridges for the gun cost a penny each, and the dead bird was worth Half a Crown, which was 2 shillings & 6 pence (12½p today) when it was sold to a game dealer who plucked and drew it (removed the intestines) after it had been hung up until the rear end was green (said to give it a Gamy flavour), who with his expenses and profit added sold it to the rich to adorn their table when cooked with the usual bottles of wine to wash it down..

Ron Parker, November 2008

GOXHILL FAIR

Many readers will remember at this time of year the annual funfair. This was set up during the late Forties and early Fifties in the paddock on Station Road next to the Brocklesby Hunt (where a bungalow called Fairfield would later be built). We children loved it. I remember well the Swingboats – rather difficult to start but great fun when you got going and most definitely a cut above our home-made garden swing. We always risked a few pennies (old money of course) on the slot machines, but the greatest excitement came from the Dodgems. The cost was a tanner – just think a whole week's sweet ration, but well worth it and a topic of conversation in the school playground instead of the usual adventures of Dick, Jock and Snowy.

Goxhill had had its annual fair in much earlier times than this. This took place some seven hundred years ago and was entirely different to the event described above. It was certainly the highlight of village life in the autumn all those years ago. Grimsby and Barton had annual Spring Fairs; so, too, did Lincoln and a few wealthy towns and villages in the Fenlands. That Goxhill received a Royal Charter for a weekly market (each Thursday) and an annual Fair says a lot about the wealth and importance of the village.

The site was in the triangle made by Howe Lane, King Street and Church Street long before these streets names and the present buildings existed. The Fair lasted four days beginning on the 31st October. Villagers would take part in the many religious ceremonies that were part of the Fair, especially on All Saints' Day. How the villagers would welcome the noise, the colour and the bustle. Imagine rubbing shoulders with merchants from Flanders, Italy, the Baltic and the Mediterranean. Wealthy villagers like the de Veres, the de Gousels and, most important of all, the Despensers would buy wines, furs and spices (pepper, cinnamon, ginger and saffron) and sell fish and wool. The king's officials would be present to make sure all taxes were duly paid. Some things never change!

The full history of medieval Goxhill is on sale at the Post Office or phone 01472 752504 for the two volume history of the village.

Russell Cook