

Raising a glass to the beauty of Mendip



With LES
DAVIES MBE

I AM always telling people that what I do to earn my living isn't like a real job. I have no set hours and work for as long or as short a time as I need without having to justify myself to any

management regime or comply to any 'political' whim.

The direction my business takes is entirely up to me and I will not earn unless I work. I am the master of my own destiny, prosper by my own effort and will even wear a pink shirt if the mood takes me – but above all I really enjoy what I do!

For all of that there are times when life is very busy, but as to whether that activity is earning any great amount of money, may at times be questionable. Every once in a while even I need time to look around and lean on the gate, take time to stand and stare in solitude and contentment. We don't do enough of this meditation and often stand accused of 'day dreaming' or having a lack of concentration.

Not paying attention was one of those school crimes that I was often guilty of, when my head was elsewhere, far away

from the classroom and roaming the woods and fields at home.

I stopped recently at the top of Burrington Combe and followed my feet up the stony track on to 'Ham'. It was one of those wonderful evenings when the sun shone but the wind had just enough bite in it to make me turn the collar of my coat up in an attempt to stay warm, (and even look cool). I stuffed my hands into the slit pockets of my Barbour and pulled the cap down a little further onto my head.

I had not intended to go far or to stay for long, but there was something that was pulling me further and further from the car park. In one of those 'looking out of the window' modes I wandered onto the edge of the Combe where the goats grazed quite content below me and the traffic wound its way up the twisting road that was once the river bed of this Triassic Wadi. Finding a place to sit comfortably I looked around.

In the tight grass sward about me were birds foot trefoil; salad burnet; plantains and a sprinkling of dog violet. There were a few small early purple orchids on the warm south slope below my feet and yellow rock rose and wild strawberry to either side. In a very short while I had identified eight species of plants without



including the trees, bluebells and bracken that were growing behind me.

Across the Combe the trees were still in varied stages of leaf. This is the middle of May and some trees are still only just waking up, so late is the season. The beech have the lovely pale green leaf but ash and oak lag behind somewhat. On the slopes of Black Down the ponies grazed, this was a landscape of tranquillity within world of frustration and stress. For me it was quite wonderful to take the time to sit and stare, there was no rush and I didn't have a train to catch or a meeting to be at. Perhaps that had been the 'pull' I had felt earlier, the need to stop and take a look around. We should all do it more often.

Inspiration in life can come from any direction. I have been inspired by many people I have met and lots of things that I have seen. Inspiration can come from friends and family or from other people struggling to deal with problems and health issues. It can also come from ordinary people who have overcome great challenges that have forever changed their lives and their outlook on life.

One such inspirational person I met recently is an ordinary young woman working for a local business where she has found happiness and a reason for being. Leanne works for Thatcher's Cider and was on a recent brand awareness training day that I helped out with, and she won the presentation part of the day with a poem about her life that I thought others might like to share (see opposite).

And finally come and see me on the Environmental Youth Awards stand below the main ring commentary box if you are at the Royal Bath and West Show. Last month's photo was taken on the West Mendip Way in Cheddar, but which property is the mythical beast guarding in this month's photo?

*My name is Leanne I'm a big Thatcher's fan so give me a pint to begin,
I will make you all laugh on just one whole glass, I'm sure that I will fit in
I am placid and very well mannered, thoughtful, helpful and keen
I look forward to this working relationship as I become part of the team
Here's a little about myself to give you some background
Although I won't mention anything about my naughty little hound!
1984 was the year that I was born,
Little did I know of what my future had in store
When I started school, I was barely 5,
Dressed in red and grey, a tiny 3ft high
Naïve and very quiet, I skipped along with grace
Back then I didn't know the life I would embrace
1996 that's when it all began to change,
Secondary school approached and life felt a little out of place
Many friendships were made, lots of happy times were had,
It's true what they say, enjoy school while you can
It was soon the year 2001 when important decisions were made,
Of where I would like to be and the dreams I would like to chase
Many of you will know that I had my daughter young,
I'm proud to say that those tough times have been overcome
I married a sweet 4 years ago and now I have my 2 point 4
After caring for my father for some time, I have opened a new door
A new chapter has begun and at Thatcher's I'm sure I'll Flourish
I look forward to making friendships that in time I will truly cherish
Many thanks for your listening, lets enjoy the day, the future is looking bright
Here's to Thatcher's Hooray!*

I'm always happy to hear from you, so drop me a line at Les.Davies@westcountryman.org.uk