

## Rural branch News - Winter 2016/17

We woke to a heavy frost and the white world outside our windows was like Narnia – it was just as if the white witch had cast her spell upon the Cotswolds and all was wintery, cold and icy.

As I walked purposefully over the fields to the wood, the ground was hard and the frost bitten edged grass gave that cotton wool crushing sound with each pace. The Old mans' beard flowed down the hedgerow like spiders caught up in some web of spiraling frozen mesh. And like paper doylies, or bunting for some winter fair, spiders webs bejeweled with frost hung from the wire fencing.

Then just like Aslan the sun slowly made its presence felt – and as its beams of gold struck the earth there was a reassuring warmth- a sense of hope rising- like a gentle but powerful roar – and within a mornings hour our world was restored – the cold grasp of frost releasing the green to breathe again and grow.

There was a purpose in my walk that morning- not just my everyday constitutional - I needed to move the sheep. They had been moved into two fields at the back of the farm, one had been corn and was left as stubbles – so there was some picking to be had there – but the adjoining field had been sown with stubble turnips, all now in good leaf with roots to pull at.

We had left the gate open between the two fields so that they could graze between them, however the flock seemed determined to stay in the back field of stubbles – almost oblivious to the rich pickings so easily available to them through an open gateway. Gradually I worked my way around them and drove them through to the other side. I had no dog with me- as sometimes Milly gets a little excited and goes a little crazy (she works better for my husband than I.) So it was a case of walking up behind them, slowly pushing them on, waving my stick and calling out – and dropping back occasionally to bring in a straggler.

Once through the gate I pushed them down to the bottom end of the field as I could see several – despite the glorious horn of plenty before them, turning in anticipation of returning to their better-known grounds.

I stood for awhile and watched as they began to settle and graze. 'O we like Sheep'. How easy it is to be like those sheep with regard to our grazing – our feeding on Gods word.

We like what we've got, we get comfortable with it and we do not move into that grazing open to us, freely available, to nourish us even more.

I have to ask the question- if the gates had been shut into that field – if the grazing had been kept shut off from them for another purpose, would they have so typically looked and seen that the grass is greener on the otherside- and then scrambled up and over the wall, or broken through a weak piece of fencing? When denied something – so often there is an eagerness to find out what we are missing out on.

So is it all too accessible, all too easy for us to attain that we just do not bother to see that which is laid before us, that which our Good Shepherd so generously and so lavishly supplies. May we have an intention this New Year to see all of Gods provision, and take and eat it, may

we allow it to nourish and sustain us – and may we taste and see that it is good! Thanks be to God.

**Rural Affairs Officer, Rosie Emmerson**