



"The Windy Tree" West Turnpike, Glanton



WILDLIFE DIARY

by George Dodds



JANUARY

A New Year and new beginnings, as pedigree ewes are lambed and cattle continue to be fed twice a day indoors. Small flocks of house sparrows and pied wagtails overlook proceedings as they roost on the shed beams. Outside, sheep graze turnip fields in the company of flocks of chaffinches, greenfinches, linnets and yellowhammers. The hunt meets at Branton East Side and Beanley towards the end of the month. The foxhounds, riders and followers are often seen in pursuit of 'charlie' through the Parish. Winter-visiting bramblings forage for 'mast' underneath beech trees at Glanton Pyke and the local kestrel patrols its favourite feeding haunts along the Turnpike. Robins compete for territories in our gardens and Winter and December moths can be seen dancing around outside lights on mild nights. Ivy fruits start to ripen along the Whittingham Road and attract a selection of thrushes and woodpigeons. By the end of the month, the first snowdrops show their white flowers in suitably warm gardens. Spring can't be too far away, as male mistle thrushes (storm cock) start to sing from the tops of village telegraph poles.



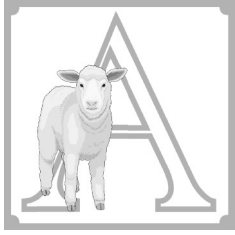
FEBRUARY

After the first day in the month, cock pheasants strut their stuff across winter stubbles in the knowledge that they are safe from the guns for another year. The daily routine of feeding silage and hay to livestock continues on the Parish farms. As bales are removed, tawny and sometimes barn owls take advantage of exposed rats and mice. Flocks of common gulls gather with fieldfares and redwings to pick their way over permanent pastures and the first vibrant yellow flowers of gorse can be found on Glanton Hill. During periods of snow, rabbits strip the bark off accessible young branches and the tracks of stoats and weasels are close on their tails down the Playwell Lane. By the end of the month, male tawny owls compete for territories and rooks start to repair winter damage to their nests at Glanton Pyke.



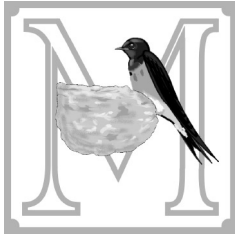
MARCH

The fat cattle and wintering thrushes (fieldfares and redwings) leave for market and Scandinavia respectively. The last of the winter stubbles are cultivated and the first lapwings gather prior to moving onto breeding sites further up the Whittingham Vale. Flocks of pink-footed and greylag geese can be seen moving north and the local goshawk starts its 'roller-coaster' display in surrounding woodland. By mid month, spring is bursting to get going, the first yellow flowers of coltsfoot, lesser celandine, primroses and dog's mercury provide colour along the lanes. Blackbirds, robins and song thrushes gather nesting material and blue tits check out village nest boxes. In fields in the south of the Parish, small numbers of brown hares gather to settle annual differences at their courts – occasionally fur will fly when boxing breaks out. On warm afternoons, skylarks sing, undetectable to the naked eye, male greenfinches zigzag high over village roofs and great spotted woodpeckers start 'drumming' in mature hedgerow trees. Catkins of hazel and sallow can be found in our small woodlands. Lambing and calving are in full flow by the end of the month as new life can be found across the Parish.



PRIL

There is little time for sleep on the village farms as lambing and calving reach a peak and spring-drilled crops of barley and turnips are sown. Lapwings take advantage of cultivated ground to display and males tumble out of the sky calling to their mates. Roe deer venture tentatively across fields at first light and black and white oystercatchers stand around flooded patches in fields. The warbling cry of the curlew can be heard from Glanton Hill as newly arrived pairs form their territories. Vixens give birth to their cubs deep underground and young rabbits leave their burrows. The first swallows arrive from Africa by mid month and – if you are lucky – the cuckoo can be heard as it passes through on its way to the Cheviot valleys. The elms up the Turnpike burst into flower along with horse chestnuts and blackthorn. Red campion and bugle start to flower and the first green shoots of hawthorn can be seen down the Playwell Lane. Hebrew characters and clouded drabs are attracted to the moth trap in South View and peacock and small tortoiseshell butterflies leave rooms, garden sheds and garages from their winter slumber. Orange-tip butterflies seek out lady's smock across the Parish whilst willow warblers and chiffchaffs sing from suitable woodlands.



MAY

After the end of the lambing and calving, the farms return to some normality but lambs still need shepherding. Suckler cows and their calves are turned out to pastures where small numbers of lapwing, curlew and oystercatcher chicks feed on invertebrates such as leatherjackets. At the edge of pools house martins and swallows gather mud to make new or refurbish old nests. Blackbird and robin chicks bounce around village gardens and nuthatches line the openings to their holes with mud in woodland at Glanton Pyke. By mid month the first of the store cattle are sold at Hexham and fertilisers and pesticides are applied to crops. Village lanes start to colour with cow parsley and hawthorn, which attract large numbers of insects, especially hoverflies, bees and flies. Queen wasps visit village gardens to collect caterpillars for their grubs and the first fox cubs venture out of their earths on Glanton Hill. By the end of the month, the last of the summer migrants have arrived and spotted flycatchers can be seen on the ends of exposed dead branches, darting off to catch insects. Ash and oak eventually burst into leaf – the parish is buzzing with life.



JUNE

Fertiliser and sprays are applied where required and young stock continues to grow. New fronds of male and tongue fern can be found along the Turnpike and the first of the dogroses burst into flower whilst whitethroats reel from the hedgerows. The moth trap at South View starts to get busier with regular catches of over 10 species (e.g. garden carpet, common swift and flame shoulder). Pipistrelle bats give birth to their kits in their maternity roosts in large village houses and swifts lay their first eggs in the dust in the cavities under their eaves. Tawny owl chicks look confidently from their perches in parish woods, and butterflies (small tortoiseshells, peacocks and common blues) feed in herb-rich grassland along our lanes. By the end of the month, silage is being cut and collected by contractors exposing feeding areas for pheasant and partridge chicks. The breeding ewes are brought in for shearing as swallows sit on their second clutch of eggs.



JULY

Haymaking starts, attracting swarms of swallows, swifts, martins and starlings. Young hedgehogs follow their parents around Glanton's gardens looking for slugs and worms. Grasses start to turn golden and short-tailed field voles continue to breed and fall prey to perch hopping kestrels and wandering barn owls. The catches in the moth trap at South View reach a peak with over 20 species and 100 individuals on warm damp evenings. Badger cubs play on the edge of their dens, in the company of the maternal sows, occasionally making 'motorways' in standing crops. Painted ladies and silver Y moths arrive from North Africa on warm southerly winds and feed in village gardens and lanes. By the end of the month, the first of the winter-drilled crops are harvested and baled and buzzards can be seen teaching their youngsters the skills of flight.



AUGUST

The harvest continues and cultivation starts for winter-drilled crops. This year's leverets find their way around newly opened-up fields. Young buzzards become more confident and start to catch their first rabbits on Glanton Hill. Roadside verges are filled with ripening seed heads but small numbers of red campion and lesser knapweed continue to flower adjacent to garden escapees such as monkshood down the Whittingham Road. Young little owls catcall to their parents as they search for beetles and worms on the eastern edge of the Parish. Mid month and local farmers are preparing all ages of sheep for the Glanton Show. At the Show visitors and locals cannot fail to see the number of wasps that congregate around the cakes and beer tent! Large numbers of large and lesser yellow underwings visit South View's moth trap and pipistrelle bats patrol their territories for small insects such as midges. Charms of goldfinches flock to feed on the seed heads of creeping thistles. By the end of the month, replacement ewe lambs are bought in from St. Boswells and brambles, gooseberries and redcurrants ripen in the Parish hedgerows. Swifts leave for sunnier climes as swallows and house martins congregate on village wires.



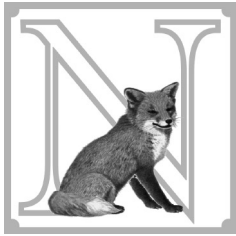
SEPTEMBER

One of the major events of the sheep calendar takes place as rams and shearlings through September. Hedges and woodlands brim with fruits and seeds and the first autumn colour appears on horse chestnut and hawthorn. Fruits attract wandering red squirrels to the Playwell Lane and Glanton Pyke. Passage migrants such as whimbrels and wheatears pass through the Parish. Pipistrelle bats vacate their maternity roosts for warmer winter roosts and the last of the swallow and house martin chicks leave the nest prior to migration. Grey partridges form their coveys on Glanton Hill and the last of the year's gorse comes into flower. Autumn gales bring down the first horse chestnuts and crab apples. Blue tits, long-tailed tits and treecreepers form roving flocks that search the lanes and woods for seeds and insects always wary of the hunting sparrowhawk. Small tortoiseshells, red admirals and wasps target fallen apples and plums for late sustenance in village gardens. Rare species of migrating insects such as migrant hawk dragonflies can sometimes be found patrolling Parish hedgerows. Large flocks of black-headed and common gulls commute daily over the Parish between Budle Bay and Castron.



CTOBER

Store cattle and fattening lambs are sold throughout the month and the last of winter-drilled crops are planted. As temperatures drop, house mice and sometimes common shrews move into village gardens and houses in search of food and warmth. Hedgehogs feed up on the last worms and slugs prior to hibernation and robins start to compete for territories around the Parish. Small numbers of angle shades and autumnal moths visit the moth trap and late small tortoiseshell butterflies look for wintering sites in our houses. By the middle of the month the first flocks of geese can be heard flying over the Parish and fruits of fungi pop up all over. Large flocks of starlings, rooks and jackdaws gather on winter stubbles to feed on spilt grain. Ivy flowers attract the last of the year's bees and flies, and wolf spiders sprint over living room carpets as residents watch T.V. By the end of the month, fieldfares and redwings have returned from Scandinavia to feed on the wealth of hawthorn berries in our hedges and pheasants become restless as the shooting season begins. By the end of the month, cows and their followers have been brought into byres and sheds.



OVEMBER

As the nights get longer, turnip fields are opened up for grazing by sheep, and cattle are supplied with silage. Everything that is fed to the cattle has more or less been grown on Parish farms and is one of the reasons why there have been so few cases of BSE in North Northumberland. The first gathering of the hunt meets in the middle of Glanton on the first weekend. Flocks of finches (chaffinches, greenfinches), yellowhammers and sparrows gather to pick through spilt grain around farm steadings. Linnets and song thrushes locate safe roost sites in clumps of gorse and stoats target rabbit warrens on the side of Glanton Hill. Jackdaws huddle around chimneypots as coal tits and goldfinches appear at feeding stations in Glanton's gardens. As the last of the leaves are blown from their branches, it exposes the domed nests of wrens and long-tailed tits. A small flock of tree sparrows (Glanton's rarest resident) chatter in hedges in the north-west of the Parish. Very few moths are attracted to the trap at South View and it's closed down until the next year. Throughout the year, 82 species of macro moths have been recorded from a wide range of habitats including wetlands and moorlands. By the end of the month, frosts take their toll of the vegetation but small numbers of shepherd's purse and red deadnettle continue to flower along our lanes.

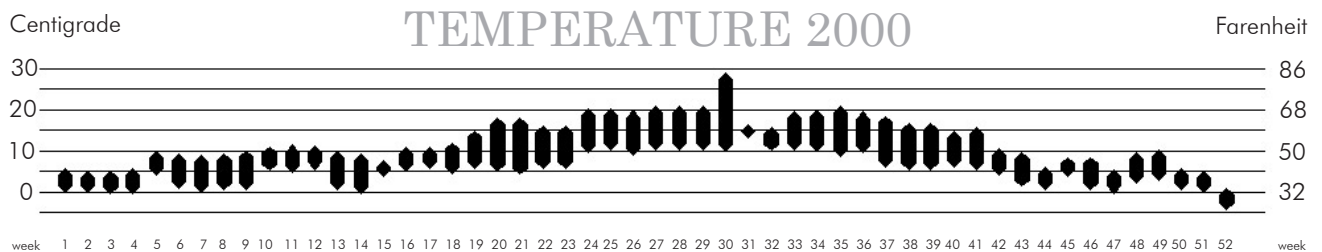
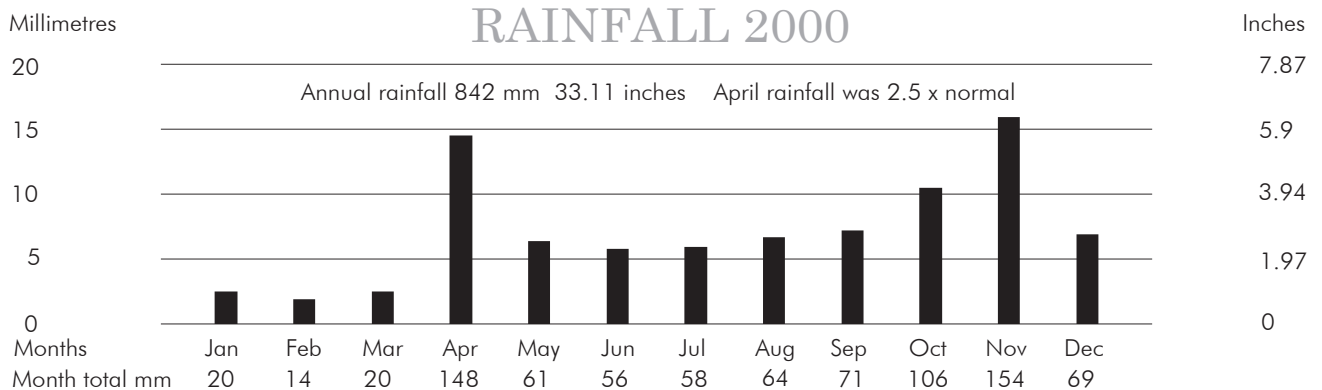


ECEMBER

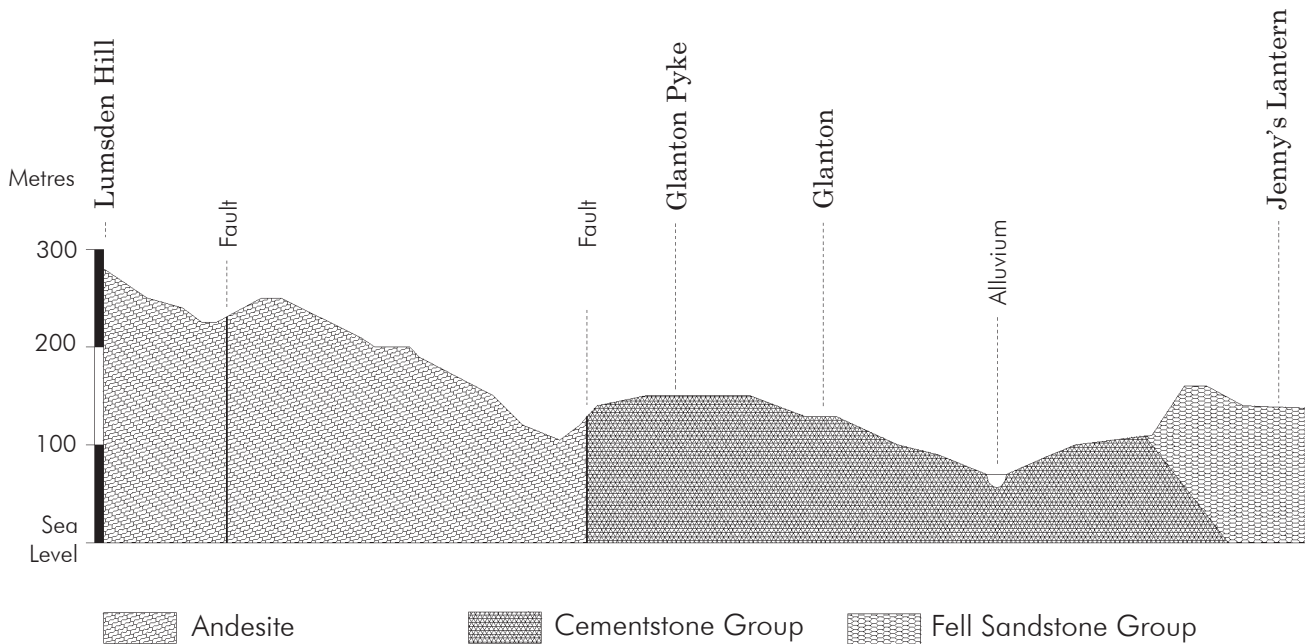
Livestock are tended to and there is time to catch up with paperwork. Pheasants retreat to the woods and game plots as shooting can be heard from Shawdon Hall and Eslington. A combination of shooting and the weather results in small numbers of woodcock found around the woodland at Glanton Pyke and down the Playwell Lane. Snipe and mallard can occasionally be found around the wet patches in fields, particularly on winter stubbles. Dog foxes move around their territories looking for an easy meal always wary of the huntsman's horn and the gamekeeper's lamp. In the village, green and black siskins visit red bags filled with peanuts and robins become bolder sometimes venturing into houses looking for 'titbits'. By the end of the month, the last foxhunt gathering in the Parish has met at Castle Inn, Whittingham. It's time to review the year – with 76 species of birds being recorded.

BIRD LIST

<i>Ardeidae</i> Grey heron	<i>Charadriidae</i> Golden plover Lapwing	<i>Tytonidae</i> Barn owl	<i>Turdidae</i> Robin Wheatear Blackbird Fieldfare Song thrush Redwing Mistle thrush	<i>Certhiidae</i> Treecreeper
<i>Anatidae</i> Pink-footed goose Greylag goose Mallard Tufted duck	<i>Scolopacidae</i> Common snipe Woodcock Whimbrel Curlew	<i>Strigidae</i> Little owl Tawny owl Long-eared owl	<i>Sylviidae</i> Whitethroat Garden warbler Blackcap Chiffchaff Willow warbler Goldcrest	<i>Corvidae</i> Jay Magpie Jackdaw Rook Carrion crow
<i>Accipitridae</i> Northern goshawk Sparrowhawk Common buzzard	<i>Laridae</i> Black-headed gull Common gull Lesser black-backed gull Herring gull Great black-backed gull	<i>Picidae</i> Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Muscicapidae</i> Spotted flycatcher	<i>Sturnidae</i> Starling
<i>Falconidae</i> Kestrel	<i>Columbidae</i> Feral pigeon Stock dove Woodpigeon Collared dove	<i>Alaudidae</i> Skylark	<i>Aegithalidae</i> Long-tailed tit	<i>Passeridae</i> House sparrow Tree sparrow
<i>Phasianidae</i> Red-legged partridge Grey partridge Pheasant	<i>Rallidae</i> Moorhen	<i>Hirundinidae</i> Sand martin Swallow House martin	<i>Paridae</i> Coal tit Blue tit Great tit	<i>Fringillidae</i> Chaffinch Brambling Greenfinch Goldfinch Siskin Linnet Lesser redpoll Common crossbill Bullfinch
<i>Haematopodidae</i> Oystercatcher	<i>Cuculidae</i> Cuckoo	<i>Motacillidae</i> Meadow pipit Grey wagtail Pied wagtail	<i>Sittidae</i> Nuthatch	<i>Emberizidae</i> Yellowhammer Reed bunting
		<i>Troglodytidae</i> Wren		
		<i>Prunellidae</i> Duncock		



All above weather readings taken at Glanton Pyke



Diagrammatic section showing general rock relationship West - East
(see Parish map for location)

GEOLOGICAL NOTES

by John Swanson

Earth history is a continual process of change wrought by forces that nowadays are within our comprehension, yet still remain awe-inspiring. The movements of the earth's plates, tectonism, uplift, descent and faulting, weathering and erosion have played, and continue to play, their inevitable part in shaping our changing world. The evidence is all around us, and no less in our parish.

One of the most difficult aspects of geology for the casual observer to perceive, imagine and understand is time. We refer to geological periods 400 million years ago when our landscape was beginning to be fashioned, while in comparison, the first records of a settlement in Glanton were about 1000 years ago. The houses we live in are between 100 and 250 years old, built with local sandstone laid down some 260 million years ago! To put this time scale into perspective, imagine 250 years, roughly the age of some of our oldest houses in Glanton, as a time scale equivalent to one inch in length, or half a thumb's length. Then 1000 years, the age of our village, would be roughly the width of your hand, and 260 million years, the age of our local sandstone, would stretch from Glanton to Bamburgh, a distance of 16½ miles! Such is the vastness of geological time.

Clamber to the top of Glanton Hill and cast your mind back half a billion years. Look north to what remains of 130 or so square miles of the Cheviot massif and imagine a time-lapse scenario starting in the early Palaeozoic period some 400 to 500 million years ago. An ancient sea, the Iapetus Ocean, covered the area and the sediments, which were laid down on the northern ocean floor form the basement geology at great depth. In time they were considerably distorted by the forces, which closed the ocean, as the North American continent collided with Scandinavia, and threw up the great mountain range, known as the Caledonides. So vast that it was higher than the Himalayas and stretched from northern Scandinavia, through Scotland and to Ireland. The Cheviots lie in what were the foothills of this massive range. As movement of the earth's plates continued, part of the range was carried westward with the landmass that we know as North America as it drifted away from Europe. The effect of this was to create geological pattern on the eastern seaboard of the United States and Canada similar to that in northern Britain.

A combination of volcanic and erosive processes gave rise to the formation of the Devonian sandstones through which in later Devonian times, about 400 million years ago, appeared the volcanoes that gave birth to The Cheviot. Initially they flung ash and pyroclastic rocks with great violence over the land but this activity died out, to be followed some 10 million years later by profuse lava flows.

Glanton Hill, or Hopper's Hill as it was known for a time, together with its smaller neighbour Glanton Pyke are composed of cementstone rock that was laid down in Lower Carboniferous times about 360 million years ago. This is a sedimentary series of rock types with its strata being composed mainly of limestones and sandstones with the latter being more common. The actual layers vary in thickness and there are intervening layers of other rock types such as marls, slates and mudstones. These layers tell their own tales of origin, such as their source rock, and the watery conditions in which they were deposited, whether estuarine, deep water, or whatever. The trained geological eye can determine not only how and when, but also the forces of nature that compressed, folded and then buried them. At this time the first true trees with woody trunks occur to form the 'coal forests'. Amphibians inhabit the swampy forests, the flora is plentiful and varied, and the first seed plants appear.

The quarry, now long abandoned, on the southern side of Glanton Pyke shows some of these cementstone features. Plant fossils, calamites, have been found here and in other locations just outside the parish, fossil brachiopods and bivalves have been discovered and have provided definite clues to the age of the rocks. The sandstone is of the highest quality and was used widely on buildings in the village and most notably on the interior of the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle.

Glanton Pyke and Glanton Hill are situated on the corner of a trough fault or double fault. The northern fault passes $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of Northfield Farm and heads south-west passing between Low Pyke and Glanton Pyke Farm before merging with the southern fault about 400 yards north of Mile End. Approaching the village from the A697, the southern fault crosses Playwell Lane 200 yards from its junction with The Causeway, runs through Town Farm and heads toward Glanton Pyke paralleling West Turnpike behind the hedge on the north side of the road. At Glanton Pyke it runs through the stable yard before merging at Mile End.

In a trough fault there exists a zone known as a catchment pit which fills with water. Springs in the faulted area are known as drift springs and this geological condition probably explains the profusion of wells and springs in the parish.

Man has worked the countryside surrounding Glanton for hundreds of years and the shaping of his handiwork can be seen in the fields, the woods and copses, and the walls, tracks and roads.

There is however a greater hand that sculpted the landscape more or less as it is seen today, that of the Pleistocene ice epoch, from about 2 million years ago to the last ice age only 10,000 years ago. Although there are no visible glacial ice flow traces, Whittingham Vale, the shape of the hills and Shawdon Dene suggest glacial erosion. It is thought that the Dene is an overflow channel through which a river flowed southward from a huge lake, created in Glendale as the ice melted.

The melt left behind a variety of debris. Boulder clays or tills form the base throughout, on which rest the subsoils with the topmost layer being the cultivable soil. Just north of the parish boundary at Branton and Hedgeley the sand and gravel beds that were deposited by the retreating ice are exploited commercially. It may indeed be possible in that area to find small precious stones that have been washed down from the granitic Cheviot Hills by the River Breamish.

The last ice age, 10,000 years ago, was the last major force to structure and contour our parish, but the litany of geological time continues with all the processes playing their part and fashioning the landscape we see today.

What will it look like 10,000 years from now?