

The Hedgehogs introduced me to...



*The hedgehog hides beneath the rotten hedge  
And makes a great round nest of grass and sedge,  
Or in a bush or in a hollow tree;  
John Clare  
1793 -1864*

**Frances Bolger and Mark Leggett**

(and Sam the Dog)

Mark Leggett and his partner Frances Bolger have lived in Goslings Way for about a year, having moved here from the spreading estate of Grange Farm in Kesgrave. I came to hear about him because he recently submitted a plaintive cry on Facebook concerning the hedge next to his property along the High Road. The hedge had been overgrown for some time, obscuring most of the footpath and thereby presenting something of a hazard to pedestrians. Judicious pruning or a quick short, back and sides seemed like a good solution; most people agreed something needed to be done. And indeed, it was done. Mark arrived home one night in September to discover the hedge had been reduced to ground level stumps and any foliage remaining was either the odd rogue nettle or weed that was simply too short to be razed by cutting machines. Mark knew the work was required but was taken aback by the harshness of the solution. His principle concern was not so much the aesthetic nature of the hedge, although this was a factor, but mainly for the small family of four who used the hedge as part of their larger domain. Namely, *Erinaceus europaeus*, better known to most of us as Hedgehogs. His post on Facebook was a request for information and his sadness was palpable. What would become of the Hedgehogs?

I've always had a soft spot for hedgehogs which dates back to early childhood when I first encountered Fuzzypeg in the stories of Little Grey Rabbit. (Fuzzypeg derives from the vernacular name for hedgehogs, *Furze-Pigs*.) Because of this fondness, I decided to engage in the Lists of FB messaging and after a short dialogue arranged to meet Mark and Frances to discuss the matter further. But our meeting became much more than just a wildlife discussion and proved to be a beguiling introduction to two quite different but equally caring individuals, whose quiet demeanour disguises their thoughtfulness.

As Autumn gathers momentum, the nights become dark much earlier. By the time I reached Frances and Mark, their house was warm and gently lit. (Modern insulation has much to recommend itself.) We sat down, with Sam the dog providing enthusiastic shoe cleaning facilities under the table with his tail. Frances and Mark began by telling me something about themselves. Frances originates from Ipswich but prefers her location in St. Martin's, not least because of the quick and easy access to the A14 and then on to the A140. Commuting five days a week to Norwich is a sizeable haul particularly as she then works a twelve-hour day in The Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.. There is no time in her life for traffic delays and sometimes conditions require her to go via Beccles, which is at least a 50 – 60 minute drive from Trimley. Her nursing career began in 1985, when Frances started working in Ipswich Hospital. Over the years she has worked on Grundisburgh and Haughley Wards. Both of these wards serve people with complex care needs and multiple medical conditions, including dementia; the work involves the sensitive provision of care for patients and relatives.

But Frances didn't remain in this specialism and subsequently became a registered Nurse and Midwife in Ipswich Hospital. This in turn led to her who eventually becoming the Head of Midwifery at the new hospital in Norwich. She delivered her first baby in 1990 and her last one to date in about 2013. Her presence has been responsible for welcoming thousands of new lives into the world.

*"I still do some clinical work, but not very much and I've shared in some very special moments. But All deliveries are special,"* she stressed, *"not least the C sections,"*

And pulling her phone towards her, she demonstrated the messages of appreciation on various Facebook sites, showing me pictures of Babies and their parents. Those moments extend beyond hospital walls and with so many babies in her life it is not at all unusual for her to be stopped in the street by grateful mothers. The messages on various Facebook pages testify to the gratitude young mothers feel towards their hospital.

The move to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital has increased responsibility as it has a much larger maternity unit than Ipswich with 19 delivery rooms and in terms of births, 5,800 is considerably more than Heath Road Hospital.

I wondered what motivated Mark and Frances to move from Kesgrave. Mark said they had both wanted a larger house and started by looking in Kirton at the Taylor-Wimpey development. This had led them on to a tour of Cavendish Grove where they fell in love with the first house they saw, including the double garage. But when they moved in they found another reason to be thrilled with their new home. The wildlife inhabitants of Longford House and the surrounding fields had seen no reason to give up their well-established domain and continued to roam as freely as they ever did before the new housing was built. Consequently, squirrels, birds and hedgehogs proved an unexpected plus in their lives and both of them have become careful and caring observer of the nature in their garden. If Mark has a preference, he didn't mention it but I suspect the hedgehogs may have captivated him entirely, providing an additional reason for to be so very pleased with their new home.

As we talked about their work, one of them jokingly said they were both in the Delivery Business. Is Mark also involved in midwifery? Not on your nelly. His responsibility rests in his role as a delivery driver for UKMail, now part of D.H.L. (D.H.L is short for Dalsey, Hillblom and Lynn.) His work is mostly based in the Colchester area. He doesn't return home until his van is completely empty, such is his thorough work ethic. Much of his working life has involved delivery, from his first job as a paper boy to working for Tufnell's 'Big Green Parcel Machines' at the age of 23, before eventually became self-employed 19 years ago. (I had a sudden thought as Mark described his life on the road. Is he a petrol head? Well, not really but he used to ride a motorbike...) However, working in delivery has made him cautious on the road and he describes himself as a very safe driver. As he is dependent on his van for his work, if it's off the road, then so is he. Responsibility is a necessary attribute in his profession. He delivers about 100 packages and parcels a day and rather like the Posties when Christmas approaches, his work load increases. During this period, he sees plenty of Tarmac and in common with Frances, may find himself working an eleven or twelve hour day.

But Mark has something else in common with the Posties. His varied work takes him to many places and he often views things the rest of us fail to observe. It was with some initial reticence he told me the following story which I briefly retell as Mark told me. It gives an interesting insight into Mark and his thoughtful, reflective qualities.

*"About eighteen or nineteen months ago, I had just dropped a package off in Layer Breton, near Tiptree. As I was coming back to the van, I saw a large plane out of the corner of my eye. It looked like one of the Second World War bombers that used to carry heavy payloads. It was immediately obvious to me it was going to crash because it was flying very low and was on a downwards trajectory. When I reached the brow of the hill it had just crossed, I looked around but couldn't see it. Where did it go? I went back to my previous customer and asked her if she had seen anything but she hadn't. I couldn't hear any sounds of a crash and was really puzzled. Something very strange had happened although I didn't know what. It completely took my breath away.*

*I drove to the centre of the village where I found the local pub and decided to go in there and then to ask anyone if there had ever been a plane crash nearby. Someone said, 'Oh yes, during the Second World War, in 1943.' When I came home I started to do some research and it turned out there had been a bombing over Chelmsford in '43 when a Mosquito had shot down a Dornier (a German Bomber) in Leyton Breton. I talked to several people later on and subsequently discovered others have seen the crashing plane as well."*

It's certainly a fascinating story and I thought of someone else, who once said to me, "I don't believe in ghosts. Except for the one I've seen!"

There is another aspect to this story which I discovered later, when researching the Layer Breton Crash and I'm not certain if Mark is aware of it. I'll add it here as part of the small world of coincidences which surprise us by jumping up out nowhere. There is a book called, "Night

Flyer/Mosquito Pathfinder: Night Operations in World War II" by Lewis Brandon, Albert Smith & Ian Smith. A short passage informs the reader that on the night of 15<sup>th</sup> April 1943, 157 Squadron were scrambled out of Bradwell, Essex to head off some Dorniers Bombers flying towards London. At a certain point in the operation, the Mosquitos were handed over to a Controller Squadron Leader Kidd. He was based in buildings you may see to this day. They are situated on the A14 side of the land known as Innocence Farm. Squadron Leader Kidd's base was at GCI Trimley Heath and it was from here the operation which resulted in the plane crashing in Layer Breton was finally directed. Small coincidences keep the world turning.

Mark has a questioning mind and this experience enhanced his curiosity for the unknown or seemingly inexplicable aspects of life. His approach, which I can't believe was ever anything other than kindly, has been to treat Life with consideration in all its manifestations and he treats living creatures with respect. And this brings me back to how I came to meet the two Deliverers in the first place. The Hedgehogs. It was concern and compassion for these small creatures which disturbed Mark and led to his expressions of concern because it is the small things in life which matter as much as the large ones, if not more so. *"You're a good man, Mark."* Frances murmured as I made ready to leave. *"And you're pretty good yourself, Frances."* I thought to myself. Here's wishing the new inhabitants, including Sam the Dog, health and happiness in Trimley.

If you are interested in Hedgehogs, you may like to record any you spot by using the following link.  
<https://hedgehogs.ispywildlife.org/report-a-sighting/>

There is a copy of:       Night Flyer/Mosquito Pathfinder: Night Operations in World War II  
                                  Brandon, Lewis; Smith, Albert & Smith, Ian  
                                  Published by Stackpole, Newbury, Casemate  
                                  1911

available from Suffolk Libraries.

If you have any comments or would like to take part in the Village Recorder's Blogging Project, please do not hesitate to contact me at:

[trimleystmartinrecorder@gmail.com](mailto:trimleystmartinrecorder@gmail.com)

LR

18/10/2018