

Country Notes for November 2025

I am sure that many of us have enjoyed the sight of several large flocks of geese flying around our villages over the last few weeks. They have announced their arrival with much honking and the sight of so many, often in their famous V formation, has been something very special. They are mainly canada geese, although there are also some grey lag geese in amongst them together with two egyptian geese. Canada geese of course have the distinguishing mark of a black neck and head with a white flash behind the eye. Grey lag geese are, as their name suggests, various shades of grey. Egyptian geese are altogether more colourful and in flight display a large brilliant white wing patch on each wing.

These geese have been gleaning in our fields for left over corn and maize from the recent harvest. Although machinery these days is very efficient some grains are always left on the fields and these provide a wonderful feast for these geese, as well as other birds.

Gleaning is a tradition that goes way back. In addition to the birds, people, often women and children, would be allowed to glean in the fields once the harvest was over. The children would routinely be taken out of school to help, much to the annoyance of their teachers! This would often provide their families with sufficient grain to make bread through the winter. It also helped the farmers as left over seeds in the fields would otherwise spring up the following year when perhaps a different crop had been sown in the fields. It was a 'win win' all round. This practise died out with the advent of more sophisticated machinery replacing harvest by hand and horse.

I wonder how many of us would like to spend back breaking time in the fields gleaning, followed by grinding the corn to make the dough for our bread!

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