

Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



Such a joy to attend country show to bring back happy memories

AS a child growing up in Devon, I was fortunate to experience some of the wonderfully simple pleasures in life – things that have stayed with me throughout my whole life.

I think my love of long walks originated in the stunning countryside around the small village where I spent the first few years of my life and returned to visit often, staying with family friends who felt like adoptive grandparents.

‘Uncle Fred’ used to show me the hidden footpaths through the woods and across the fields, while ‘Aunty Hilda’ would take over the entertainment duties when we returned, with a game of cards or Scrabble. We used to pick fruit in the summer from the loganberry vines that grew in abundance in the sunshine at the end of their garden, creating seemingly endless jars of jam that lasted all year round.

My dad was a member of the British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC), so almost every Sunday in the summer months, we used to pile into the car and travel – often in convoy with other divers – to whatever beach along the Devon coastline they had chosen for the day. I remember the fun of the CB radio (yes, I’m that old) conversations between the cars.

I remember the boat rides at the end of the day after the divers had returned, the games of rounders on the sand, and the beach barbecues of freshly-caught fish. Mackerel, ideally. It’s my all-time favourite fish, and I still love catching mackerel off a small boat when I’m on my summer holidays, gutting them on the shoreline and cooking them as quickly as possible on an open fire or barbecue.

With slightly less rose-tinted glasses, I

remember that we went to the seaside on those Sundays come rain or shine, and with the British summer weather being unpredictable at best, I also remember the never-ending hours of being cooped up in the back of a car while the rain lashed down outside. Of course, it didn’t bother the divers who were wet anyway, but my sister and I didn’t always enjoy each other’s company as much as our poor



Marie Goldman MP makes a friend at the Essex Young Farmers Country Show
PHOTOS: MARIE GOLDMAN MP



Marie Goldman MP with James Nixey



mum probably hoped, and I certainly remember that we wound each other up with very little thought for the herculean patience she displayed.

I also remember a childhood where every year, my dad – and, latterly, also my sister – would volunteer as a steward at the three-day Devon County Show. This

impressive show is still going strong to this day, and it remains far more than an agricultural show.

Yes, there were the obligatory cattle parades and sheep-shearing competitions. There were tractors and trailers, horses and carts, steam engines and prizes for the best-grown vegetables and flower arrangements.

But it was also a place for school trips and showcases, for fairground rides and dog agility performances, and for ice creams and cold drinks in the sunshine (or, more often than

not, sheltering from the rain in one of the massive marquees).

But the bottom line is that it was all good family fun.

Which is why it was such a joy to attend Essex’s own version of that in the form of the Essex Young Farmers Country Show, last weekend at Boyton Cross near Roxwell.

I was lucky enough to be invited along by the show chairman, Jonathan Hockley. As we gathered with other guests in the subscribers’ tent last Sunday morning to kickstart the day, he underlined the huge effort that goes into organising this incredibly well-attended one-day show.

It is entirely run by a small, 60-strong army of 16-28-year-old young farmer volunteers who give up their time throughout the year to bring together this wonderful family-friendly event, welcoming about 16,000 visitors in just one day.

Jonathan talked about the incredible feat of erecting the boundary fencing for the show in just 45 minutes (I can’t even begin to imagine how that happens!), but also the year-round dedication to make the show a success.

I spoke with James Nixey, the 2025 chair of council for the National Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs (NFYFC). He grew up helping out on his family’s farm and, although still involved, by day he is now a self-employed electrician.

Farming is a tough business at the best of times, with many farmers earning below the national minimum wage, and many are worried about the future.

But last Sunday was about celebrating all that British farming has to offer rather than dwelling on the challenges.

I have to admit that I thoroughly enjoyed the few hours I spent there. I mean, I got to hand-feed a goat (I’m a big ‘kid’ at heart...), have a look at some big machinery and wistfully watch the gorgeous and stunningly well-trained gun dogs, wishing my black labrador would consistently fetch a ball, let alone respond to hand and whistle signals from across the other side of the field. (I bought her some treats as I left, wondering if I might be able to spend some more time training her in the near future.)

All in all, it was such a lovely event.

I hope lots of you managed to get over there. And if you didn’t make it this year, I would wholeheartedly recommend putting it in your diary for next year.

Britain is full of great swathes of beautiful countryside, including right here in Essex.

It’s such a joy to meet the people who look after it and carry on the time-honoured traditions and rural skills that have been passed down through the ages, interspersed, of course, with new technologies and modern methods.

The really good news is that if you’re a small business or part of a rural community, Chelmsford City Council has a new Rural England Prosperity Fund to support rural businesses and community infrastructure, which is now open for applications.

For details and information about how to apply, visit the city council’s website here: www.chelmsford.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-ukspf/rural-england-prosperity-fund.

Keep well.

Marie

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