

# Up Front

*Back to my roots.*  
By C.J. Hadley



**Q**ueen's Crag, Gowky Shank, Cotherstone Moor, Deepdale Beck and Cushat Law. If I had known about these lonesome places in Northumberland's Cheviot Hills, I might not have left the gazillion puking chimneys in Birmingham and got on a boat in Liverpool to cross the Atlantic. But then—thanks to *RANGE* and two Northumbrian natives—I wouldn't have been treated to drenching rain at Hadrian's Wall (breached in the Barbarian Conspiracy of A.D. 367), a bagpipe show by a biologist/poet out on the moor, and tea, cakes and jam with new friends in Rothbury.

I returned to England to help celebrate my brother Bob's 80th birthday. Our sister Audrey

walkabout, my rare trip to Britain showed that Scots and English cowmen and shepherds have similar pressures to our own. In particular, do-gooders, Greens and government. The Brit do-gooders have already outlawed fox hunting and are attempting to outlaw meat due to global warming. (They have yet to realize that God is in charge of climate change.) The Greens want to protect the Borderlands of England and Scotland by removing the sheep, which have been grazing the area for more than a thousand years. And we all know that bureaucrats share the all-seeing eye.

Why do they want it? To traipse over private property with reckless abandon. Because it's beautiful and healthy. Because they don't understand that it will change after the removal of sheep, and not for the better.

These dolts have no clue that it's tough and mean out there on the purple moors. John Doad spent much of his life digging boulders on the Cheviot's tilled fields. He told writer Tony Hopkins, "We'll not get the benefit, but others will." Hopkins also wrote about Tom Foster, the oldest working ploughman in



*FROM FAR LEFT: Andrew Miller plays bagpipes out on the moor. A retired conservationist at Northumberland National Park, Andrew now works on mountain rescue missions, leads a Scottish pipe band, and writes poetry about the land. ► CJ in a borrowed raincoat in front of Hadrian's Wall, which was built by Romans in the second century "to keep out the thieving Scots." ► Val Miller and CJ visit a World War II site. Andrew and Val are splendid guides and beautiful people.*

and three of her children had come from Australia, plus 29 other Hadleys, Radfords, Wards and Varneys from Canada, Sweden, Wales and Scotland (some would say too many Hadleys) but we had a lovely time at my brother's expense, after we gathered at Butler's Cottage.

After several picnics and pub parties, I rolled north solo on BritRail to visit shepherd subscribers in Scotland. Elaine Fletcher's good story, "Sea, Sky, Sheep," about husband, Gordon, in Argyll was in Winter 2020. Two Northumbrian cow, sheep and duke stories are in this Summer issue: "Return of the Reivers" by Dom Naylor and "Low Bleakhope" by yours truly about shepherd Stuart Nelson start on page 30.

For a woman who used to be on perpetual

England at 88, still looking for jobs. "If I was to give up," Foster said, "I'd just sit around, man, I'd just die." You will hear the same from isolated old ranchers in the American West.

After Hopkins finished his photo book, "Northumbria: True to the Land," he claimed that Hill farming on the Borderlands "could crush your spirits or make them sing." Pretty much like the rural American West.

At press time, COVID-19 rages around the world. I am presuming our printer will print, postal workers will deliver, and our phone will start ringing. And when we get past this agony, I pray that do-gooders, Greens and government will all awaken and finally realize that our food producers are the ones they should protect and cherish. ■