

## A Beastly Battle for Fruit

For the past few months I have been observing the natural changes taking place on the rectory garden trees along with my granddaughter Kitty. We observed from October to June, noting the buds, the flowers and the growing fruits.

Knowing that our cherry tree in particular is very popular with the furry-tailed rats, Kitty and I made many verbal remonstrations with them, shouting to warn them not to eat our cherries on the cherry tree, but stick with the nuts!



The rectory cherry tree, naked as summer starts

In fact, I can report that even whilst sitting underneath the tree, I have seen squirrels bold as brass come up and climb the trunk to raid the cherries in front of our very eyes. When we made remonstrating noises, they ran away, but reluctantly and with a lowering look which said: "I'll be back!"

As the summer approached, I waxed lyrical with Kitty, mentioning the red ripe cherries, the cream, and sweet taste and the summer pleasures awaiting us.

The waiting was part of the pleasure of course, as the cherries grew bigger and their hard green colour slowly changed to yellow, then pink, then bright red.

My plan was to make a big effort to harvest the cherries on Sunday 17th June, making it a big family affair with Kitty in the leading role. On the Saturday night, I looked at the tree and relished the morrow's activities, especially the feasting!

But the best laid plans...

I went out to examine the tree before the 8am mass on the Sunday and I couldn't believe my eyes.

Yes, they had done it again! Only a handful of cherries remained. All around the trunk of the tree were the cherry stones, evidence of an outrageous two-gingered gesture to the human race still sleeping inside the house.

When the awful truth emerged, Kitty cried. What can I do? Anyone got a shot gun?



**Neil Richardson**