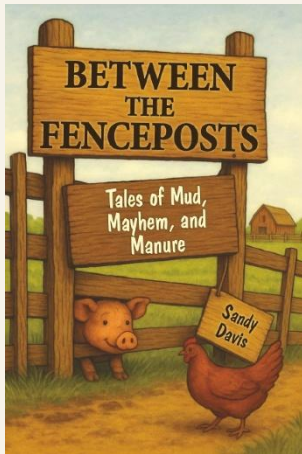




*Between The Fenceposts* begins with the sort of barefaced (literally) truth of rural life that really does happen in such places. Having lived in Argyll, West Scotland for some time I can immediately recognise the sense of place. The rural location is somewhere that help is given readily and quirks abound.

The book is a succession of themed chapters, expanding on a huge number of stories of real life. The tales often feel tall, so tall that they can only be true. They are the sorts of events you just couldn't make up. I especially recognise the animal-based chaos, having grown up on a small holding that started as a plan and became a

place for waifs and strays.

There is a superb fusion of sentimentality, reflection, sharp wit and the edgy reality that you just need to survive a whole range of situations. I am instantly reminded of the anarchic antics of the Yorkshire vet James Herriot, and nearly every tale leaves the reader with a wry smile. Having lived in a similar location some of this feels like a documentary!

Each chapter is half a dozen or so stories on those mentioned themes. As well as specific animal chapters (goats, sheep, pigs and others) there are also selections on weather, tools, reflections and more. Let's pick out a few - I think my real favourites have to be the animal stories. They provide a richly drawn set of characters that generally refuse to comply with any rules at all.

One great stop off is the story of donkey BK, an apparent goat whisperer that is described as having a "face like he just got caught chewing on your good curtains." Then there's the sheep that tried to order at McDonald's. When we get to the pigs, a bear intrusion stands out, neatly framed as *Les Miseranimals*. It doesn't end well for one of them and here we are reminded of the rural reality as hero Melvin, felled by an angry bear, serves his ultimate purpose as ham.

At one point chicken ownership spreads to guinea fowl. As a previous owner of these attractive birds, I can endorse the sound level issues – and we kept them in an area hundreds of yards from the house. This particular flock make a wind assisted bid for freedom to become feral and a potential local legend!

There's a dog determined to hatch out eggs, another very determined to guard an injured goat, and a third that seems determined not to wear its post-op cone. They all help join together many of the stories, playing the man's best friend role to the full. Normally willing, not always quite able, and often going and doing something quite unexpected.

You can imagine these stories told in front of a crackling fire with a hot drink, or from a comfy chair on a porch some evening. With each telling they probably become richer as the teller recalls more details.

They have an honest, reflective tone, a generous mix of reminiscence and joy. But whilst there is some sadness at the end it's not maudlin, it is celebratory sadness. The author is sad for not for what they give up as such, but more for the adventures, chaos and farm-based antics that they will miss out on in the future. The tales are part of who they are, a large part.

The storytelling is deeply personal and utterly accessible. I can imagine grandchildren being sent into the house to get refreshments and a story, then relaying it to the parent that didn't grow up on the farm, and who probably can't believe it is true. Having lived this sort of life in two places I can most definitely say they are true and more! I would love to hear some of the stories that maybe didn't make the book.

Whether you know this life or just love a good yarn, this is a delight. The reader quickly feels like they know the author personally. There is a later line that still works out of context, "...being a grown-up is overrated." And throughout the stories there is a ready wit, a desire to laugh at circumstance and near-disaster, whether that's bear attacks, fleeing fowl, or home butchery turning into accidental self-surgery. Its very personal but in the most open of ways, and it's a pleasure to have been allowed into the world that exists *Between The Fenceposts*.

Available at Amazon [HERE](#) (Paperback) and [HERE](#) (ebook).