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Great balls of fire

Went to church on Sunday and met someone who wanted to talk to me about flea powder - thus proving that he had read my last blog. I don't know why I assume nobody reads what I write - but there's always hoping.

I am usually punctilious about writing nothing of interest to anybody in the village - but now I feel compelled to jazz things up a bit. So - here goes: last week, when I was doing my rounds of the lanes, I noticed small bits of hair - furballs distributed in the hedgerows. At first sight they looked like dandelion seeds gathered together, or the kind of debris stuffing up the Hoover, but on closer examination with a muddy stick, they turned out to be old balls of cotton wool. Why, I mused, would anyone require cotton wool in the countryside, let alone the kind to apply Clearasil with? I have heard that the laybys near where I live are used as outdoor knocking-shops, and wondered if this perhaps would provide a clue, except that the cotton wool was miles from anywhere, down the side of a field as sexy as an infinite sea of mud can be. All around were finches - this is a particularly good year for gold ones, who dart across the hedges like flying tinsel, and I wondered if they had stolen it from some nearby bathroom to make nests from, but it seemed unlikely. My query was answered by a farmer, I met. Apparently, cotton wool balls impregnated with vaseline makes a great fire-starting kit, favoured by travellers. When it is as wet as it has been recently they don't work, and they fling them into the ditches.

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