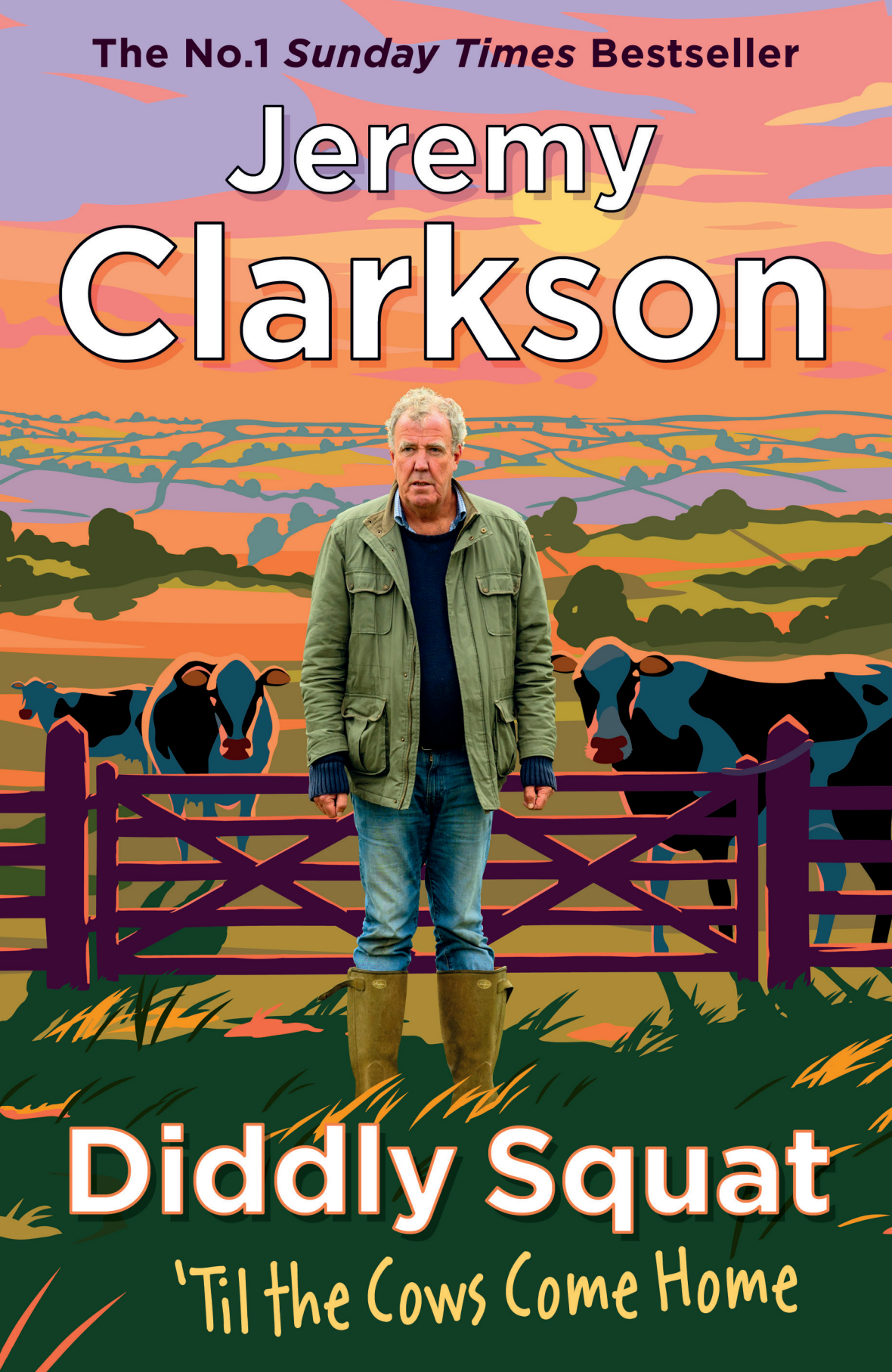
The No.1 *Sunday Times* Bestseller

Jeremy Clarkson



Diddly Squat

'Til the Cows Come Home

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Born to Be Riled

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The World According to Clarkson

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And Another Thing

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For Crying Out Loud!

Driven to Distraction

How Hard Can It Be?

Round the Bend

Is It Really Too Much To Ask?

What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

As I Was Saying . . .

If You'd Just Let Me Finish!

Really?

Can You Make This Thing Go Faster?

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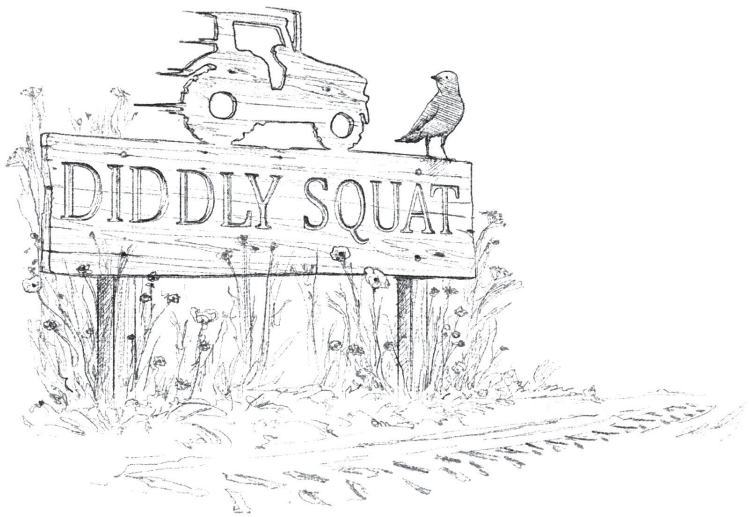
JEREMY CLARKSON



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This book is dedicated to all of the world's farmers.

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The contents of this book first appeared in Jeremy Clarkson's *Sunday Times* column. Read more about the world according to Clarkson every week in the *Sunday Times*.

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Introduction

Hello . . . in my first book about life at Diddly Squat Farm, I explained how I'd survived a year of biblical weather, a forest of red tape, a lockdown, a herd of escapey sheep, ten million vindictive bees, chickens, trout and supply chain issues. So it felt a little unsatisfactory to finish with a story about how I stopped a school trip from urinating in my garden.

. . . So, picking up where we left off . . . Diddly Squat's still going strong(ish). I continue to love what I'm doing even though I'm not very good at it. And to make things worse, I now have that most dangerous of things: a little knowledge. For instance, I know the difference between wheat and barley, and I know what oilseed rape is for. But what I know most of all is that farming is unbelievably hard work, and not very well paid.

There are times though, when a spare moment presents itself and the sun is shining and I can lean on a gate, chewing on a piece of grass. And then . . . it's the best job in the world.

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SUMMER



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Cows on the rampage



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Last month I watched some alarming video footage of a policeman near Reading deliberately ramming a cow with his pick-up truck. The poor thing had escaped from its field and was wandering around on a road, in some distress. Apparently, it had knocked a shopper over and there were fears it could eat someone's lawn. But even so there was no need to kill it. It's not like it was a brontosaurus or a saltwater crocodile. It was just a cow.

So why didn't plod entice it with a bit of hay, or call a vet, who could have pulled something humane and scientific from his bag of Herriot trickery. Ramming it with a two-ton police truck seems so brutal.

We are told that the cow represented a significant danger to motorists but as the road had been closed this seems unlikely. What seems more likely is that whoever decided to implement a new policy of ramming cows is 'a bit thick'.

Still, the British plod did better than their counterparts in America because back in March, when officers in Virginia were asked to deal with an escaped cow, they

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reacted by arriving on the scene in a blizzard of noise and flashing lights and tried to shoot it – which resulted in them missing ten square feet of slow-moving cow and hitting one of their colleagues. Then, after he'd been taken to hospital and the cow had been wrangled to the ground by someone who knew what he was doing, they shot it anyway.

It's all too tragic for words but at least there is a silver lining. I've decided, against all my instincts, to install some new fencing.

When I was younger I used to sit watching the most interminable drivel on television because I couldn't be bothered to get out of the chair and change channels. Now, of course, thanks to the remote control I don't have to. As soon as James May says 'Hello and welcome to . . .' I just press the button and, kerpow, he's gone.

Nor when I want to speak with a friend do I need to go to the phone box and stand in a puddle of tramp urine, or wait for the neighbour to get off the 'party line' because today it's considered a 'human right' to have a smartphone of your own.

Life is easier and faster in every way. We don't have to crank a handle to start the car. We don't have to put up with feeling green around the gills for 90 minutes when we want to cross the Channel. We don't even have to go to the shops when we want something.

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However, when we want to build a fence, we are still expected to use the exact same system as those apes we saw at the beginning of Kubrick's space odyssey. You deploy something called a 'fence knocker', which is a heavy bit of iron with handles on the side and is far and away the most tiring thing in the world.

Knocking in one post takes about 20 minutes and in a mile of fencing there are 1,320 posts. And on my farm there is maybe 20 miles of fencing. Get that job done and I could beat Tyson Fury at arm wrestling. That's why I use a different system, which is called 'paying someone else to do it'.

Except now, thanks to global warming, or transgender issues, or some other kind of woke plague, I can't even do that because there's a massive planetwide shortage of timber.

A small beetle, no bigger than a grain of rice, decided recently to eat Canada. It started in British Columbia, stripping the bark off every tree it could find, and now it's halfway across Alberta. God knows how it's still hungry after all of that but it is and soon there will be no trees left.

And it's not just the six-legged Mr Creosote that's causing the problem, because there's also the Wuhan bat. When that caused the world to shut down, some people went home and spent their newly gifted free time

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making bread. Some learnt French and some broke out the watercolours. But the vast majority reckoned that because they were stuck at home they may as well spruce the place up a bit.

So off they went to the DIY store, where they bought timber for decking, timber for new fencing and timber for an extension. And this wasn't just happening in Britain. It was happening everywhere.

So now there's a huge surge in demand for what the beetle hasn't eaten and, to create the perfect storm, there's also a shortage of sawmills. After the last recession in 2008, a lot of lumber yards suffered a kneejerk reaction to the sub-prime problems and shut up shop. So now, when timber is cut, there are very few places that can turn it into lumber.

And Covid has also caused chaos with shipping. So even if you can find a tree that hasn't been eaten, and you can find a sawmill that's still open, you're going to struggle to find a company that can deliver it. Which is why you might want to look at getting your wood from Europe. Yeah, well, post Brexit, good luck with that.

The upshot is that fence posts now cost more than most space rockets. And to buy one you have to meet a shady chap called Derek round the back of the pub.

Sure, I have planted many trees over the past year or so, but it'll be 30 years before they can be used to

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separate farm animals from idiotic policemen, which is why I turned my attention to fencing made from iron.

And it's the same story. Because wood now costs more than heroin, everyone has thought the same thing, and as a result every company making metal fences has filled its web pages with words like 'Due to unprecedented demand'. Which is corporate speak for 'oops, we've sold out'.

Walls are not the answer either. Yes, there's no shortage of stone. We are standing on it. But there is a shortage of people who can arrange it so that it doesn't fall over. I have a great guy on the farm but he's 72 years old and can barely keep up with the badgers that knock over what he repairs every night. Asking him to build 20 miles of wall would finish him off. And anyway a drystone wall is no real barrier to livestock. Sheep just clamber over it and, given the right motivation, a cow could win the Grand National. Pigs, meanwhile, are so good at escaping, they make Steve McQueen look like a rank amateur.

I'm fearful then that in the coming months we will see a lot more livestock on our roads and that maybe some new legislation may be necessary. Legislation that reminds officers they may not deliberately run down cows, or dogs, or any animal for that matter. Just burglars.

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Growing chillies has cost me a fortune



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