



not quite the *lastword* by Janine Adamson

No (wo)man is an island

You can be in a room full of people yet feel completely alone. It's true, isn't it? Loneliness comes in many shapes and sizes. Equally, here we find ourselves, in an industry which by its nature facilitates solitude, whether that's being a farmer, agronomist, trials officer or in my case, a magazine editor.

It's important to note that loneliness isn't just a symptom of an older generation, although it's acute within that demographic. Similar to grief, and perhaps in some ways connected, it can hit you out of nowhere and leave you stunned. No (wo)man is an island, after all.

Cards on the table, I've always struggled to make meaningful connections.

I believe that's because I place such emphasis on the meaningful part. So when I have been surrounded by people, either in a personal or professional environment, I've been desperately seeking a sense of belonging which sometimes just isn't there. Cue feeling very small and rather alone.

Some of my saddest times have been when I've tried to make myself fit into situations which just aren't 'me'. Forcing

friendships with people who don't have common interests or shared goals. I can even recall being 'friends' with someone who didn't like being outside and disliked dogs — ridiculous. You could say that's a result of being half country, half townie. Where do I belong?

On the flip side, some of my happiest moments have been discussing my favourite crop pest at great lengths (it's the potato cyst nematode by the way, seconded by the codling moth). Or explaining how the crashing waves of Scotland are realised through the rumbling motifs of Mendelssohn's The Hebrides Overture. I get highly invested in specifics, which can be quite handy working in journalism I guess.

In honesty, although admittedly unusual, I'm pretty content with the person that I am. So why am I so bothered about what other people think of me? The answer is, a desire for validation. I believe we can all be guilty of that at times; it's deep rooted in wanting to belong and be a part of something. And don't feel ashamed of that, it's completely natural, it's just how you manage those desires.

For me, it's learning to accept that I'm not everyone's cup of tea but hopefully I'm the occasional person's champagne (I like that one). I just have to find 'my people' — form a team of folk who champion me, and stick with them like glue. We all deserve a genuine circle who loudly celebrate our successes and show up for us when times are tough...and in my case, like dogs.

But in the meantime, how do

we cope with the loneliness in the moments between and while our select cheerleaders are otherwise busy? While we're crop walking on a rainy day, poking around with a spanner, or sat trying to figure out a stewardship application? I always joke — too old for Young Farmers but too young for U3A!

I've been told it's important to not force the matter and that new friends come in the most unexpected of places. But for many of you, the pool to source from will likely be quite small. A little like dating, finding the right 'one' while living in the middle of nowhere with nothing but a small army of cabbage stem flea beetle to muse to, is probably quite daunting.

Perhaps you're wondering why I'm discussing this so candidly with you all? The reason being, maybe this is the

only magazine or literature that you have the chance to read this month, so if what I'm saying resonates with one or two of you, I've done something useful with this space.

Making friends as adults is incredibly hard and people don't discuss it enough. People grow apart, lives move on and times are very busy. So if anyone has a magic formula, please let me know. But what I'm aware of is the gift of kindness and expressing how you feel. Tell someone when you recognise something good in them, when you appreciate them, when they inspire you. Bypass the negativity you sometimes see online.

Let's start a chain of meaningfulness and slowly build our connections. One or two might just stick and grow into something more.



A love of dogs is an essential characteristic of those in my close network (meet the new Adamson pup, Ted!).