

July 2026

Wild life report

I am very sad that our Swallows have not returned this year. I got huge pleasure in watching them fly in and out. I think that part of the problem is that our pond has completely dried up and this means that insect life is well down and also they used to fly low over the pond and have a drink on the wing

Farming report.

I am writing this this on the 2nd June and we have at last had a decent rain! Apart from the Oil Seed Rape, our crops have been looking increasingly under stress. To add to our woes, the wheat crop has been invaded by Aphids. Andrew won't use insecticides on the farm, so the wheat has been sprayed with silicon that makes the wheat very tough and difficult for the Aphids to eat. In the meantime we hope that Ladybirds come along and eat the Aphids, they love them! The wheat changes colour from green to blue under these conditions, but I think that the rain may have just come in time. The wheat was in flower by the end of May, It used to be possible to wear an ear of wheat in your button hole for the Herts Show and that was the case this year. Wheat is self-fertile, but the developing grain will require moisture and hopefully this rain will have come just in time.

In spite of the dry weather, our spring sown crops have looked quite good, as I mentioned last month this is probably due to Andrew keeping the ground covered all the time and the dressing of muck that the fields get from Brookfield in exchange for our straw.. We are growing "Wild Wheat" on contract for specialist flour and spring oats for the cereal market. So your Scotch porridge oats that you have for breakfast, could maybe come from us as they are processed at Camgrain in their special plant. Both the wheat and the oats are being affected by fungal diseases and they are being sprayed with a bacteria that should eat the fungus. Both crops have come into ear very early and this is due to the stress brought on by the drought. When plants are stressed, they tend to rush into flower and then seed in order to make best use of what little stem and leaf that they have. This means that the straw will be very short this year and I have no doubt that grain yields will be well down.

Last year I tried to persuade Andrew to have the farm pond cleaned out. It dried out just before harvest and so the job didn't get done. This year, however, the ponds have dried out much earlier and as Andrew had hired Roger Melbourne's Son Clay to make a road on the farm. I was able to get him to clean out the pond before he left and he has made a beautiful job of it. You wouldn't believe how much muck has come out! It is now drying out next to the manure heap and will be spread on the land in the Autumn.

Garden report.

Our Summer vegetables have germinated very well except for the Sweetcorn. I suspect that the ground was too cold and the seed may have rotted off in the ground. We have sown again and hopefully it will soon come through. Sweetcorn straight out of the garden is my favourite vegetable! We are having a very good crop of Broad Beans that were sown in the Autumn, when picked young they are simply delicious to eat

Harry Bott