

Diary of observed local harvesting and rural benefits



Michael Pierre de Villiers

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Title page: An older New Hollander TX64 plus combine harvester at a nearby farm, rapeseed in our adjacent field and the field with snow and ice on the trees, a newer New Holland CR9080, a straw baling mishap, a horse at a nearby farm, a juvenile Robin shouting for food and a Gatekeeper butterfly.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

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2026-10-24

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INTRODUCTION

Living next to an agricultural farm one has the opportunity to witness the crop cycle. It has never ceased to be interesting to watch harvesting, baling and later preparation of the ground for the next crop. Living in a rural environment one has the added advantage of walking farm footpaths, seeing more in the way of farming activity and wildlife.

It is always satisfying to see and smell a fresh harvest. There is not much to see when planting seed. However, one is always aware when the ground has been prepared by the almost pleasant smell of manure in the neighbourhood. Pleasant, because it is all part of the reassuring seasonal routine and that all is well.

Many years ago, at a Durban general aviation airport where I was a flying instructor, there was a crop spraying family (father and two sons) that seasonally based themselves at the airport flying Piper Pawnee agricultural spraying aircraft. On the side of each aircraft was stencilled: If you eat food you are involved in agriculture. Very apt.

August or September, is always harvesting time. The usual crops in the adjacent fields are wheat and barley. Less often rapeseed for its oil, such as cooking oil. Occasionally there was a Fava bean crop and the first time of which I am aware, in 2026, grass (type unknown) for hay.

Harvesting is always interesting and free to watch. Most often the more obvious harvesting and baling process is seen. One cannot miss seeing and hearing the large combine harvester. Thereafter one is alert that soon the remains of the crop will be baled and see the fascinating way a piece of equipment collects, compacts, wraps and ejects the bale. Preparing the field next to our home for the crop, such as ploughing and sowing, are less obvious and easily missed. Almost a stealth operation. Not aware it has been done until one notices the field looks different. Sowing is a quick process using a tractor towing the seed drill and planter, small by comparison with other farm equipment. At times one sees spraying of the crop during the growth process. Being at work or out of the home at the time of the unannounced event means another opportunity missed, such that the entire process of sowing and reaping in a season can be missed.

There is always more bird activity during harvesting. Flocks of gulls and pigeons appear looking for loose ears of seed, settling in the wake of the harvester and lifting again ahead of it when it approaches again along the next row. Buzzards and Sparrow Hawks appear looking for exposed rodents and once, after everyone had gone, a fox appeared. Occasionally, small Roe Deer appear. Every summer a pair of Buzzards nest in the copse between our adjacent field and the next field. For a few years we had a pair of Pheasants that became very regular visitors to our garden. One season, the female brought chicks to the garden. She managed to raise 3 of the original 8. We subsequently saw them from time to time. Thereafter, visits by male Pheasants became rare. Never females. We became adept at identifying them by subtle head and plumage differences. Of course, my wife's bird feeders attracted other birds, such as Robins, Blue Tits, Starlings, LBJs (little brown jobs), Wood Pigeons and Magpies (Hume 2011). The last two named would feed on ground spill. Occasionally, Carrion Crows would take part, or rather take

over. Other birds knew their place. The Wood Pigeons could be a nuisance, trampling plants. The Magpies learnt to launch themselves from the ground at the fat ball feeder, cling on as long as possible while pecking at the fat ball. On one occasion they managed unhook the feeder and open it on the ground for a feast. Tree rats (Grey Squirrels) can be a problem by gnawing the mesh.

Of course it was not always fair weather. There were winter days with snow. It usually never remained on the ground for more than a day or two or three. Very pretty but also stark at times and not the best weather for animals. Seen below, unusually early snow on the 2nd of December 2010 and sheep in snow on the 24th of January 2021.



However, this article is more about the sowing and reaping process of crops through the years from 2009 to 2026. It is at times repetitive. Living in a farming area, during walks along farm footpaths, one also sees the crops other farmers have planted, as well coming across animals such as cattle and sheep in fields. There are also other creatures of interest observed near to home. These have been included in the article.

The author is far from an authority on agriculture. Therefore, some statements may not be entirely accurate. Hopefully not totally inaccurate. Rather the author is an interested and fortunate amateur observer that has learnt a bit with time.

2009

The first introduction to farming activity in the field was on the 28th of September when a new



row-crop John Deere 6800 tractor (1st registered in 2009) was seen towing a ringed roller to compact and flatten the ground after harvesting a Fava bean crop (photographed 24th of July) and preparing for a new crop.



While out walking in our new neighbourhood in August we were surprised to see these African fowl on a nearby farm. Thought the climate would be too cold for them. Apparently not.

Then in September our first sighting of male and female pheasants. Including the male having a sand bath.



2010

Our first winter in our new home. Our male and female Pheasants continued to visit. Seen here in snow on the 9th of January along with a Wood Pigeon.



Meanwhile in February (on the next page), these ducks were photographed on a local pond. Male and female Mallard ducks with rarely seen in the area, a male Mandarin duck.



During November, this wasp's nest was removed from the loft after the entire colony had died. When opened, numerous dead wasps were seen and a much larger queen. The entrance hole was sealed. The dormant hibernating new queen was never found. It was many years later that another wasp's nest was found at the other end of the loft. The same procedure was used. This time what looked like a queen was found and removed.

Big excitement at the beginning of September, the 1st. We had our first ringside view of the farmer's field being harvested.

Very efficient and interesting to watch. The harvester cuts and scoops the crop, then threshes it separating the grain into a tank. The straw is chopped into short lengths and dropped behind spread on the ground. The chaff (small fine bits such as seed casings) is blown out of the rear (Bell, 1969). When the seed container is full, the harvester driver signals to the tractor driver with a grain trailer. The tractor driver positions the trailer alongside where a boom extends from the harvester. Seed is then deposited into the trailer while still moving forward and harvesting. It is quite an art to keep the trailer in position. The trick is to fill the trailer from the back to front so that the tractor driver can see when the trailer is full. The tractor driver cannot see if the back is full if the trailer is filled from the front.



The combine harvester is a later 1990s axial flow Case IH (International Harvester) 2188 (RitchieSpecs). On the right is the first harvested row awaiting baling.

Harvesting can be a very dusty process. We have to close windows and doors, especially if there is any wind from the direction of the farm. Chaff is carried to the house. Sometimes cars on the leeward side have to be hosed clean.



The tractor with an Easterby ET12 grain trailer waiting to be loaded (GM Stephenson Agricultural). Regular visits from the male and female pheasants continued. The female being more elusive. Their preference was for sunflower seed. Most unusual, four females visited on the 17th of February.

It makes financial sense for smaller farms not to have all the necessary sowing and reaping equipment, but hire specialised services, or are part of a co-operative. Being surrounded by farms we see increased farm traffic activity in the neighbourhood around these times, particularly tractors. Consequently, it is always interesting to see what equipment will be in the field each sowing and reaping season.

2011

Beginning of August, harvesting the fields behind our house of barley or wheat was complete. On the 3rd of August the remaining straw was baled.



Disgorging a bale of straw wrapped in a plastic sleeve and bales ready for collection. The row-crop tractor is a Case IH MXM140 PRO. The round baler is a New Holland BR7060.

This meant a glorious time for all the birds. Birds, such as Gulls and Wood Pigeons could eat loose ears of barley, or wheat that were left behind. The mice, etc where exposed, so the Red-Tailed Kites and Sparrow Hawks had a good time as well. By the way, there is a significant difference between straw and hay. Straw comprises the dry left over stalks of cereal crops, such as wheat, barley, rye or oats. It has very little nutritional value. It is used mainly for livestock bedding, thatching, to a lesser extent as fodder. Hay is usually made from grasses, such as

meadow grasses, ryegrass or alfalfa. The entire plant, stems, leaves and seed heads, provide fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals, essential for animal fodder (Happy Hay).



A month after baling (on the 2nd of September), a tractor pulling a contraption appeared that was used to break sand clods and levelling passed over the field. It had three rollers with what is known as breakers. Basically, rows of knobs. Different from other ringed rollers. The John Deere 6910 is a row-crop tractor, designed to navigate between crop rows without damaging the plants (MechRank). Then on the 26th, the field was sprayed by a Bateman 2001 HI-LO with Contour spray mechanism. Again, not known whether it was fertilizer, herbicide, fungicide, or whatever.



Our male and female pheasant were still regular visitors. The male becoming fairly tame, the female less so. Both not flying away in our presence, rather edging away. We had to stop using a ground feeder, because it began to attract a rat. Instead, when we saw them arrive, we would put a ration of sunflower seed in the tray, which they would demolish. Hang around for a while then depart.

2012

This year the crop was rapeseed, a crop used to produce cooking oil, among other uses.



The crop was sprayed on the 21st of May, again using Bateman 2001 HI-LO with Contour spray mechanism (seen above). As I understand the situation, most spraying is about controlling weeds such as pre-drilling (sowing), soon after drilling, pre-harvest and autumn. On the right above, the crop is seen in July before harvesting and having discarded the flowers.



Previously, June the 3rd the field of rapeseed with rainbow was photographed. Apart from the resident pheasants there was also a visit by a Red Legged Partridge in June that looks more like pink legged. Photographed on the 8th.

Harvesting was accomplished with the same combination of machinery as in 2011. The 2188 Case IH 2188 with tractor and grain trailer seen on the 21st of August. Then on the 11th of October the rapeseed crop remaining stubble was sprayed with the same Bateman 2001 HI-LO with Contour spray mechanism as before. Possibly weed killer.



2013



A snow start to the year, seen in this photograph on the 19th of January with an abandoned ringed roller on a nearby farm.

It was back to a barley crop in 2013.

This year the crop was harvested on the 3rd of September using a New Holland CR 9080 combined harvester with

the same resident John Deere 7810 row-crop tractor and blue Easterby ET12 grain trailer. Below right, the harvester can be seen ejecting the chaff.



Two days later on the 5th, the tractor was in use towing a Claas Quadrant 3200 square baler. Seen below scooping the straw and ejecting a bale.



Later the same day the bales were loaded onto a flatbed trailer by a JCB 580-70 telehandler (Lectura) and taken away towed by what could be a blue Ford tractor.



On the 10th of the month two different tractors were busy in the field. Definitely two different tractors. They had different registrations. During the morning a John Deere towed what appeared to be combination harrow and drill (seed sowing) equipment across the field. Then

late in the afternoon a John Deere 6830 tractor towed a ringed roller to compact and flatten the ground that was also seen in 2009 and 2011.



On the 28th of August, six days before the harvest while walking a footpath on the farm these cows were photographed while passing through their field. Then, during September while walking a footpath through a different farm, while my wife was picking wild blackberries, this speckled Wood Butterfly was photographed.



2014



The year was a return to rapeseed. Photographed on the 16th of May. It was harvested on the 29th July. The rapeseed crop cycle is 10 to 11 months with sowing in autumn or early winter. The crop cycle has two distinct phases; a vegetative rest phase through winter then vegetative recovery until harvest (AHDB). Therefore, what was seen after harvesting the previous year was likely rapeseed sowing and not fertilising. Planted in September 2013 and reaped in July 2014 is a ten-month cycle.

The combine harvester was again a New Holland CR 9080 working in the summer evening. A bonus after the harvest was seeing a fox in the field.



While out walking a farm footpath in September we meet a herd of cows. Fortunately, meeting cows in fields there has never been any sign of danger. Nevertheless, it always pays to be very wary when small calves are present. Then the herd can be dangerous. Less likely when the calves are bigger. One can usually detect early signs of agitation and steer clear. Do not believe you can out run a cow. They can move fast. September, the 12th, was also dry manure spreading month with a Bunning Lowlander Mk4 74 dry manure spreader. Suspect it is a Massey Ferguson tractor.

2015



September 10th, the New Holland CR 9080 combined harvester was back again along with the usual John Deere tractor and blue Easterby ET12 grain trailer. It was late in the afternoon.

Facing toward the sun meant that photographing the machinery was mostly in silhouette.



The pair of pheasants were now almost daily visitors. The male would walk to near the conservatory door as if to ask where is the food then follow one to the food tray like a tame chicken. The female was still more wary. During one breeding season the female brought 5 chicks or poults into the garden. As mentioned earlier the ground feeder attracted rats. Therefore, we only put food in the tray when they arrived. Only sunflower seed. In the past we became aware this was all they ate, leaving anything else.

2016

A return to a barley crop in 2016 and the old team of New Holland CR 9080 combined harvester ejecting chaff with John Deere 7710 and blue Easterby ET12 grain trailer on the 18th of August.



Earlier, 26th of July, a pair of Red Legged Partridges visited (Hume 2011). Meanwhile, May 25th our male Pheasant was not well. He had a damaged foot and was limping. Possibly a scrape with a fox or dog. He used our garden as a refuge for food and water. This was the last time he was seen.



2017

This year the crop was Fava beans harvested at about 6:30pm on the 28th of August. Same collection of machinery as the previous year. The lower sun angle toward the sun made photography more difficult. The 3rd of September Roe deer were spotted foraging on the far side of the field near the copse with its pond.

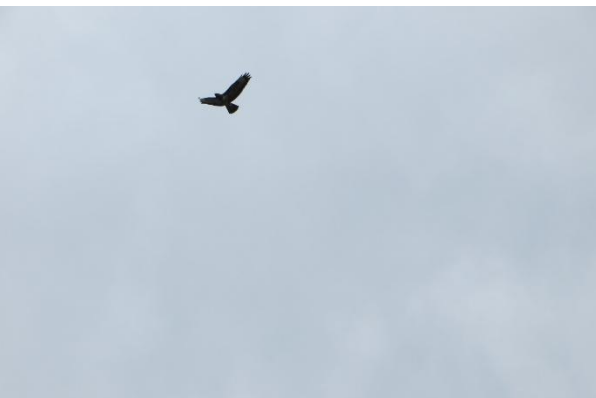


2018

It was a warm and dry summer with drought in places. Our lawns turned brown. Same collection of machinery as the previous year. This time barley harvested on the 4th of August during late afternoon.



2019



No harvesting photographs. However, on the 13th of May saw what is believed to be a Buzzard soaring over our house on the 23rd of March.

2020



Witnessed the muddy field being prepared for sowing on the 5th of March. First time this unusual crawler tractor, a John Deere 8200V, was seen. It was towing a Simba Horsch cultivator used for secondary tillage.



Missed the harvesting the previous year and this year. Did see the farmer baling straw. On the 8th September. This time a John Deere 6105R tractor and a John Deere 4510R round baler. Photographed a Buzzard in a tree at the copse on the same day. Difficult to spot.

Did take photographs of crops in the



neighbourhood farms during June and July. Barley above left and wheat above right and examples as home, barley and wheat. It can be difficult to identify the two crops while growing in a field, at least to the amateur. Barley has a fibrous top, whereas wheat does not or very little.

Also photographed during May and June; sheep, a goat, a bull, cows, a Sparrow Hawk with pigeon kill and Magpie and a goose killed by a dog off its lead.

The Sparrow Hawk made the Wood Pigeon kill late the previous day then ate some, returning the next morning. Most likely a female and grey chest (Hume 2011). Males are smaller (with a russet tinge chest) and unlikely to tackle a pigeon. Even so, it was too heavy for the female to carry away. The Magpie was waiting for scrapes. Some years later, I witnessed a Sparrow Hawk catch a Starling from a flock on the lawn about 2 metres from the conservatory door. I did not move. Apparently, it could not recognise me as a human through the double glazing. I watched while it strangled its prey, claws clutched on throat then began eating. Then decided better of it and flew away with it. A very pretty bird when seen that close.



The note attached to the goose by way of protest with understandable anger says “Why dog off lead? I am sick of it.” There are signs at numerous places telling people to keep their dogs on a lead. Often ignored. And a pest when walking. Some people do not like dogs. Only hotdogs.

2021



August the 24th was harvesting day. The New Holland CR 9080 combined harvester was back. Cannot remember if the crop was wheat or barley. The tractor looked familiar but the grain trailer was different.



The baled straw was not collected and taken away until the 1st of September. The flatbed trailer and JCB telehandler appear to be the same as the combination that were used in September 2013.



The 7th of March there was a rare Pheasant visitor, a male. June, the 21st, witnessed a female Blackbird wrestling with a dead frog. Eventually, with the dead frog in its beak, it ran across the lawn (the way Blackbirds do, they generally do not hop) and disappeared into a flowerbed. In August between the 10th and 18th there were numerous butter butterflies.



Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock butterflies.

2022

During June, while on local farmland footpath walks, crops were photographed in fields in different farms, as shown below. The identity of some of the crops are uncertain. Identification is the best the author could manage by online searches. Believe it or not, an online search failed to find a book that provided colour field crop identification. There was one that has drawn ink illustrations. No colour photographs. Not helpful.

Fava beans photographed 22nd of June 2022.



A barley crop photographed the same day, 22nd of June. Apparently, barley and rye have a similar appearance making identification difficult.



Photographed the following month, July the 15th, was this ripening rapeseed crop before harvesting. And for the first time, seen and photographed, this wren in our garden. Very rarely and fleetingly seen since.



It was a hot and dry summer again with brown lawns. Then, August 15th, it was harvesting time. Harvesting the wheat crop in the early afternoon with the formidable New Holland combined harvester back again. This time the newer CR1090 model. It was photographed being dismantled for transporting. By 3pm the straw was in the process of being baled. This time a John Deere V461R round baler. Similar to, but not the same as, the John Deere round baler used in 2020.



The tractor and grain trailer was new to the author. They were photographed standing outside the farm buildings before harvesting on the 6th. The tractor is a John Deere 6155R and a very new looking Bailey grain trailer, possibly an 18T (seen of the next page). This was also the beginning of a walk along farm footpaths walk during which a field of ripening Fava beans were photographed, as well as potato crop. The remains of a harvested potato crop was photographed later on the 19th, as well as nearby cows.



The 12th of October it was muck spreading time. Bottom right in the above collection of photographs is a Claas Arian tractor with a Bunning Lowlander Mk4 74 dry manure spreader.

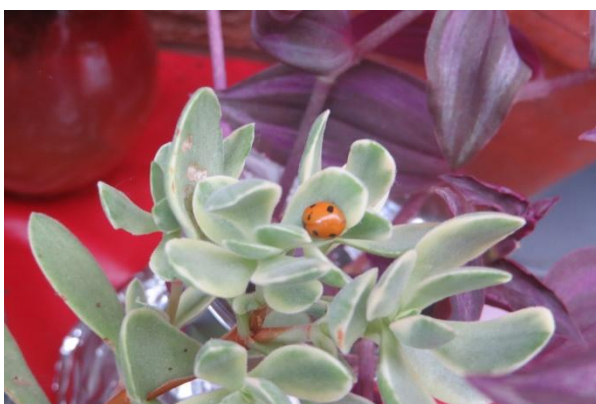
Mention was made above of difficulty identifying barley or rye. Rye is closely related to barley, further complicated by barley and rye hybrids. Rye tends to be longer and slenderer than barley or wheat with a longer beard than barley (Discovering Belgium). The photograph (left) is of crop samples collected on walks. To my untrained eye they are wheat, barley and oats. Unlikely any are rye. Apparently, rye prefers sandy soil, such as in East Anglia, south and south-east England (Francis, 2009)

2023

During a walk along footpaths in farmland to the west (February the 17th), I passed near the local the pig farm and another where cowshed waste was being deposited, which is also the farm where African Guinea fowl were kept. The same farm where they were seen in 2009. Could be the same birds. They do have 10-15 years lifespan.



This year, in the adjacent field, Fava bean was planted seen in the photographed the 10th of June (above right). During July many more than normal Ladybirds were seen in the garden, more specifically 7-spot ladybird (*Coccinella Septempunctata*)(RSPB, 2009).



August the 24th, the Fava beans were harvested around 6 to 7 in the evening. The New Holland CR1090 combined harvester was back again.



October the 26th, Magpies had a ball removing the feeder containing fat balls from the stand, opening the feeder end and devouring the fat balls.

2024



Another rare pheasant visitor February the 9th. Apparently, the type seen in our garden is a Common or Ring-Necked Pheasant (Hume, 2011, RSPB,2009).

May the 30th, at the local pond, a pair of Canada Gese decided to make the pond home to raise five goslings. There was also a very rare visiting Mediterranean Gull or Little Gull (Hume, 2011, RSPB,2009).



While out footpath walking on the 28th and 29th of July, I passed alongside a field with a crop not noticed before and could not identify.

Compared with crop photographs found on the internet, it appears that it is oats.



While walking on the 28th heading toward home the path was along the one side of a field. The problem was that a herd of cows with calves were slowly grazing and drifting to the shade of tree and the path. It was a hot day.

One always has to be careful when there are calves. The mothers can be aggressive. I passed keeping my distance from them on the open side of the field. Some simply stood and watched, others paid no attention.

It was not a good year for the wheat crop in the field adjacent to our home. In general, it was not a good year for the area.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs accredited official statistics (published 10th July 2025) states: “Average yields for wheat and barley were lower in 2024 compared to 2023, and generally below the 5-year average. Winter planting was severely hampered by wet weather and flooding, with the East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber



particularly hard hit. Winter wheat planting was severely affected and the wet spring hampered plantings of spring wheat. The area of winter barley decreased by more than 15%.” The neighbouring field was waterlogged with standing water for an extended period. When the wheat did begin to grow there were large bare patches where weeds took over. Seen in the greener patches in the photographs on the 28th of July at the bottom of the previous page.

Harvesting of the crop was on the 22nd of August, using the now ubiquitous New Holland CR1090 combine harvester with combination John Deere 6155R tractor and Bailey grain trailer. Notice the now full grain trailer pulling away from the harvester and in the photograph right, the bare greenish patch of ground (minus wheat crop) near the harvester. The departing tractor and trailer can be seen in the background going to be emptied at the farm barn.



September 17th Roe deer in their summer rusty red colour were seen grazing in the field. A Carrion Crow was in the field in the foreground. On the 31st of October a Sparrow Hawk sat nonchalantly on decking in the garden. Long enough for me to get a camera.



In the meantime, on the 24th of October the field was prepared for the next crop. The photograph shows a John Deere 7250R tractor with what appears to be a cultivator of some sort. It could be a chisel plough that can be overturned to a mouldboard plough.

Cultivators are implements used after a plough to prepare a seedbed. However, some ground surfaces require minimal cultivation then ploughing is not necessary (Bell, 1996).

2025



April the 4th this Robin was in the garden close to me armed with a camera. In the breeding season they are less inhibited. Being more focused on food gathering for chicks

7th April. Three Roe deer photographed at maximum zoom at the far end of the farm field next to our rear garden at 16:57 BST (15:57 UTC). Identified one buck and one doe. Suspect the third one present was a doe. They are in their winter dull, slate grey colour. Both sexes have a distinctive white rump and no tail. In summer the coat becomes bright rusty red. They weigh about 10kg to 25kg fully grown (The British Deer Society). The barley crop was beginning to grow seen much

taller on the 12th of May.



Near to home, on the 21st May, this unperturbed goose eyed me as I walked past. This was in the same farm and same place as the dead goose was seen having been killed by dogs. Two days later in a farm near the pig farm, this rapeseed crop beginning to flower in a farm adjacent to the pig farm.



Harvesting this year was the earliest recalled on the 3rd of July due to a warmer than normal summer. The same team of combine harvester, tractor and trailer was present from the previous year. It was rather dry and dusty.



On the 4th of July the John Deere tractor pulled a fancy round baler, a John Deere C451R, that had a rotating contraption on the back wrapped the straw bale in a plastic sleeve then dropping it to the ground.

The 16th of the month it was time to feed the soil. This lorry was used to spread soil nutrient.



Then on the 28th of the month it was a different process and different nutrients, no doubt. There was this apparatus attached to a tractor that spread slurry. Power for the spreader came from the tractor, the slurry was drawn from a tanker via a long hose (seen in the photograph). Slurry consists manure and unusable organic matter mixed with water. Allowed to ferment, it becomes a natural fertiliser with nutrients, such as nitrates, phosphate and potash (AWSM and PRW).

Then around 7pm on the 5th of August, a loader tractor and Bunning Lowlander Mk4 74 dry manure spreader were back. The field was getting the full treatment. Notice the front end loader equipment.



A visiting crow seen below. A pair of Carrion Crows are regular visitors. Cagey and fly away for any reason. Believed to nest in the copse on the other side of the field. Often hear their loud, harsh and repeated calls from the copse. Below right, a Blue Tit at a feeder.



2026

It became apparent during the this crop season that the reason for all the soil treatment later the previous year was for a different crop. The farmer wanted an excellent lawn. The grass would be harvested for hay.

“Hay is dried grasses, legumes, or other herbaceous plants” harvested for animal forage and feed for, livestock, such as cattle, horses, sheep, and other ruminants. It can also be used for bedding. The cut hay is packed into bales to preserve nutritional content and reduce moisture. The bales are easier to transport and store rather than in loose form (Nafzger (a)).

The first crop was ready for harvesting on the 7th of May after spring rain. It was a particularly hot and dry summer with widespread drought. Nevertheless, the second crop was ready to cut and bale on the 8th of July with a 3rd crop on the 5th of October. The first harvest caught one by surprise. The only photographs being toward the end of the baling procedure. The second harvest was seen in time to see lawn mowing. The third harvest, the whole procedure was witnessed.



Mowing the lawn on the 7th of May and 5th of October. Notice the loader tractor (left).

First a tractor pulled and powered a lawn mower that left the cut grass lying on the ground. Then a tractor powered and towed a rotary rake that swept the cut grass against a board so that

the grass was left piled into a windrow for baling (below left). Then a tractor pulled and powered the John Deere C451R round baler first seen in 2025. Not always was one tractor dedicated to a particular piece of machinery, although there is a suspicion that the same tractor was attached to the round baler. This year the round baler was used to wrap the bales in black plastic during the first and third harvests. A square baler was used on the 8th of July (as seen previously in 2013) to produce rectangular bales. Below is a selection of photographs.



October the 5th: The sweeper with round baler and showing the bale being wrapped in black plastic.



The field with round plastic bales on the 7th of May and rectangular twined bales on the 8th of July.

The early part of the year was one with fairly regular rain. As mentioned earlier, into June through to July and August was very dry and hot drought conditions. Then wetter again from September.

Being no expert, my theory is that up to May there was enough moisture in the grass for it to be baled in plastic. Baling hay in an airtight plastic film, excludes air and facilitates fermentation process to produce silage. Silage is edible food for ruminant animals, such as dairy cows, beef cattle, sheep, and goats (Nafzger (b)).

By July, although the grass had grown again (my lawns were brown and dead looking), it was not sufficiently moist to bale for silage, hence the different baling method. By October the regrown grass was again sufficiently moist to bale for silage.

Finally, my wife fitted a feeder for small birds on a window looking out over the garden. There were small bird visitors, such as this Robin seen on the next page. Then I saw this unexpected

guest. It got there via a pot plant to one side of the window. The mouse was oblivious to our presence. Even tapping on the window produced no reaction. It finally left of its own accord after its appetite was sated.



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