

Mill Common report

Tim Harris

Dear Kelly, Swanton Morley Parish Councillors and RPA,

The second half of the 2025 summer grazing on Mill Common continued in the same vein as the previous months, incredibly dry, plus recording four heat waves in this period too. Although the grass was hardly plentiful, our five Simmental cows and heifers found enough forage, bolstering grass with reeds and vegetation from the tree's lower branches. It reminded me of stories of my Grandfather, who in summer drought, would cut Elder from hedgerows to sustain his cattle. I was relieved when rain finally arrived, for the grass and us farmers with seed in the ground.

Wildlife wise, I saw a single adult Heron take off and make a call, I am always fascinated by this bird. It was closely followed into the sky by a second Heron, so I was doubly pleased. They circled quite low emitting a squawking call, and then I saw him, a young juvenile on post and railing, his parents encouraging him to take flight as they were unsure of my approach. I had watched the adults pair up last year, so to see they had successfully bred and were all flying together was a great sight. I've seen the youngster since elsewhere, on his own and he's looking well.

I don't dislike Wasps but I'm not keen on being stung, I was walking towards the cattle and found myself suddenly surrounded by a few angry Wasps, so quickly stepped backwards. At my feet, what looked like grey wood ash. On inspection, it was the remains of an underground Wasps nest. It had been predated by a Badger, I could see his claw marks where he'd scraped the football sized nest out to feast on the Wasp grubs. His speed must be amazing I guess, to tear out the nest, have his fill and make a retreat before being thrashed by its inhabitants is truly impressive.

Without doubt our cattle benefit from the habitat Mill Common affords us, so we are grateful to Swanton Morley Parish Council for the use of again this season. The Simmental girls finally headed for home on the 30th September. I would also like to thank Bernie Marsham who kindly allow us access across his land for loading and unloading of the beasts.

Sometimes conditions can make things a challenge, but It's never a chore to daily walk through, checking the cattle, observing what nature gives. Every day different and always something to enjoy.

Kind regards

Tim Harris

For and on behalf of H E Harris & Sons.