

Wild Things Visit to Bamforth Farm

'It's been the best trip yet!' said Kath as we left Bamforth Farm in August. We'd been shown around the farm owned by Rob Atkinson, a keen local naturalist. This was quite a change from our usual field trips to nature reserves.

It's a small family farm in Wawne, run entirely by Rob with his son, Neil, and wife, Sue. Originally a dairy farmer, Rob now has half his 90 acres under spring barley and the rest under grass for beef cattle, apart from four acres sown with winter bird food mix, which sadly has failed to thrive this year.

The fields were bone dry, but as we walked along the hedgerows and Engine Drain, we were surprised by dozens of Gatekeeper butterflies, Brown Hawker dragonflies, Holly Blues and some interesting plant life such as Small Teasel, a scarce plant in this area now, reintroduced by Rob.

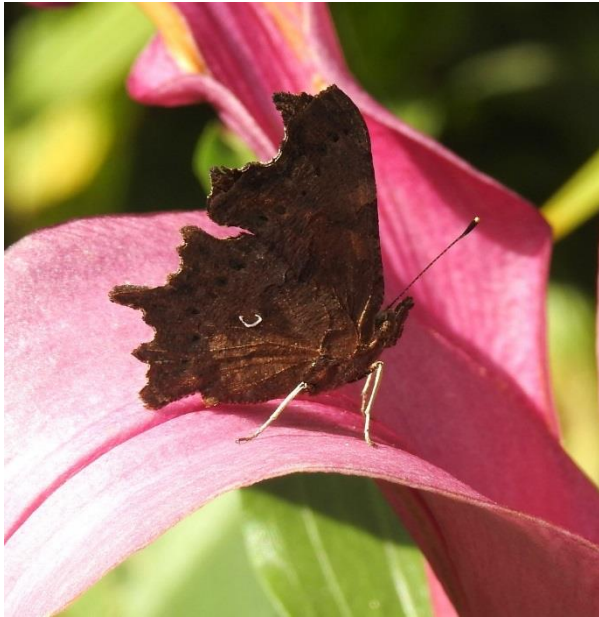
Anyone know how the Engine Drain got its name? asked Rob. David did: two windmills from the 1600s once pumped water into the river. As we walked towards the River Hull along the field edge, sweating in the heat, Rob's herd of mixed breeds heifers and bullocks, lurking sensibly in the shade, came frisking out to investigate. A few of us were slightly intimidated.

After a quick look at the River Hull, we walked back down the deserted Ferry Road, where once you could cross to Thearne. Three of us snuck onto the beginning of a hidden footpath going up the drain and were thrilled to find a tiny nature hotspot. Common Blue butterflies and even a few much scarcer Brown Argus were nectaring from Red Bartsia plants, while predatory dragonflies circled, Southern Hawker and Common Darter.

Back at the farm, we sat in the gorgeous insect-friendly garden, enjoying refreshments laid on by Sue, before examining the contents of Rob's moth trap, which he'd set up for us the night before.



Above: Swallow on a wire



Butterfly and moth gallery from Bamforth Farm. Clockwise from top: Comma, Holly Blue, Common Blue, Poplar Hawk Moth, Gatekeeper.

Below: Mervin and Peta check the Poplar Hawk Moth on Peta's cuff; Bamforth Farm; Teasel by the Engine Drain; Gatekeeper on Creeping Thistle; our group in the fields; Rob leads his herd while we keep our distance



Pictures by Mervin Nethercoat, Helen Kitson, Paul Sears and Kath Forrest. Report HK

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