

Country Notes for August 2015

August and the very height of summer. Hot days with the heat shimmering over fields of ripening wheat. Swallows and House Martins dipping and diving overhead while the silence of the summers day quietens the bird song, apart from the call of the Yellowhammer, which always manages to call regardless of the season or the heat.

Here's hoping anyway! Let's hope that this isn't another August of drizzle and grey days!

One of the joys of August has always been the appearance of red poppies in field boundaries and in meadows. At one time they were a feature in the fields of cereal crops but with the advent of autumn sown crops, the earlier harvest often results in combine harvesters beating the beautiful red flowers. In fact they have been a feature of cornfields since farming began. The name poppy comes from the word pa pa which was what they were called 6000 years ago by the farmers of ancient Mesopotamia.

Field Poppies, as they are often known, grow to about two feet in height and enjoy ground that has been disturbed, hence their appearance on agricultural land. The red flowers with a black centre are about three or four inches in size. They are found over a huge area including Europe and North America and nowadays are associated, of course, with remembrance, after their ready appearance on the battlefields of World War 1.

When and wherever they flower they cannot fail to brighten up an August day - whether the sun is shining or whether it is grey and drizzling!

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