

Blackheath Farms – May update

It is very easy to forget that the winter just passed was one of the wettest on recent record and the continuous threat to Friston village and surrounding area from the heavy rain and resulting flooding, contributed to by run off from surrounding fields, was a difficult one to control. The fact Friston sits in a slight bowl and all surrounding land drains towards it does not help and where fields became totally saturated from persistent rain on Blackheath land and that of the other neighbouring farmers, we had to resort to digging new deep drainage ditches to contain the field run off, which I am pleased to say eventually came into their own and worked well. The new drainage scheme at the end of Mill Road is also working well and the road has not flooded this winter due to the new ditch system to take the water from the road down to the flood alleviation area to the south of the village.

The wet has now turned to extreme dry and you will have noticed the irrigation guns have been working in earnest now since March and the strong easterly winds have not been welcome in both drying the surface soil even faster and then also creating the dust experienced of late. Let us all hope for some natural precipitation shortly to help manage the situation.

The benefit of the wet winter though has been a spring full of flowers and colour and I am delighted to see our environmental margins along all the main roads and footpaths coming into bloom with such vigour. We have continued to enhance the Estate this winter with the planting of many more kms of flower margins around fields and also a further 8km of new hedges, taking the total planted over the past 2 years to near 20km now.

With the current situation with Covid-19 there has been much increased public access across the Estate which is great to see, but there are minorities who persevere with taking access through the private parts of the Estate and the woods which has to stop for both their own safety and also the opportunity for the wildlife habitats.

Whilst these environmental margins and areas have created new habitat for wildlife that we hope to see flourish, we do need the public to please stay off these areas with dogs and stick to the plentiful and wide ranging network of footpaths provided across the Estate and observe the wildlife from a distance.

Finally, the redevelopment of Friston Hall and the surrounding buildings made a tentative start before the Covid-19 shut down, but I am delighted to see the builders are now back at work and progressing the transformation of the historic Hall and surrounding buildings into a collection of remarkable properties again. You will be able to monitor progress of course during the next year or so from the footpath that passes in front of the Hall.

Giles Hanglin – Land Agent Blackheath Farms