

Autumn

The dark plough furrows stand straight, steaming in the warm rain. No crops have been sown, the fields are bare. There has been no respite from the downpours, climate change is making its presence increasingly obvious.

A cleft moon hangs in an opaque sky washed turquoise by a succession of heavy afternoon showers. The wind has gone with the fading light and a solitary Raven gliding by the great Cedar in the arboretum, utters a few desultory 'cronks'; a lachrymose salutation to the passing day and a prelude to the argumentative Tawny Owls that compete in a night time cacophony from either side of the garden.

A vast congregation of Cyclamen seemingly merge in the half-light beneath a massive Beech in a low flush of pink and white.

The quietude of the garden brings recollections of the bright sunshine of just a few days ago. Red Admirals, with their black and scarlet wings slashed with a bar of purest chalk and Commas, tawny and ragged winged, feasting on the remnants of the delft blue Buddleia panicles.

A brownish blur dashes past, a bumble bee sized insect whose wings beat so rapidly that there is an audible whirr. Approaching a late flowering perennial Sweet Pea with incongruously large pink blooms, it halts, hovering with furious wing beats, but with body motionless before the flower. A long tongue unrolls and probes to draw the flower's nectar. After a few seconds, it retrieves its tongue, moves up a few inches and hovers again before another flower, sampling its sweetness. In a few moments, seemingly tiring of this particular plant, it disappears with extraordinary velocity towards a Sedum 30 yards away. The Humming Bird Hawk Moth, with its brownish forewings and orange underwings, is a spectacular insect. The hot summer has suited them. Many migrate over the channel in the early summer and lay their eggs on plants of the Bedstraw family. These will give rise to an emergence of adults in the late summer, some of which may be able to over winter, if they can find a suitable site in which to hibernate.

The combination of warmth and heavy showers in early October encouraged an exceptional eruption of mushrooms. Great rings of them, packed and gleaming white, the short grass greener and thicker about them, marking the release of nutrients by the fungal mycelium. Some rings are 30 yards across; they stretched across the fields as far as the eye could see. Giant albescent puff balls, bulbous alien artefacts, littered the ground in random groups. Everywhere different fungi some brown capped and white gilled – Death Caps; absolutely deadly and yet others, a gourmet's delight.

The last few days have seen our late Swallows flying their families above and around the old farm buildings thus imprinting their location within their off spring. Later, they roll and tumble amongst the strolling cows. Here are the insects to enable their existence, here on the green organic and vibrant turf.

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