

August

The harvest has begun in Southern England. We spotted many combine harvesters busy at work late into the evening even on Sunday during a recent journey into Huntingdonshire (which is now a district of Cambridgeshire, but I like the history of the ancient county boundaries) and Northamptonshire. This field my husband spotted near Grafham Water last week may not be there now.



THE sylvan slopes with corn-clad fields
Are hung, as if with golden shields,
Bright trophies of the sun!

Like a fair sister of the sky,
Unruffled doth the blue lake lie,
The mountains looking on.

I don't know what Wordsworth would have made of pylons. His sister was so austere she may not have approved of electricity, but I suspect a poet would find an incandescent bulb more convivial than the midnight oil for the practical purpose of work, and therefore might have been inclined to tolerate the pylon that brought the electricity to his cottage.

Driving though Essex I spotted some blue fields which I couldn't immediately stop to photograph. Allowing an extra hour on the next trip I was able to find them off the main A road, and could identify them, not as lavender which I first thought but as flax, or linseed. But by then the flowers had faded such that it was no longer the impressive sight it had once been. But a few days later on a walk I spotted these.



At first I thought they were an aromatherapy side line amongst the rows of sweetcorn until I got home and started to search. If I am right (and if I am wrong knowledgeable readers will put me right) these little purple flowers are called purple tansy, or bee plant in England (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*) where it is planted to attract bees for pollination. Sweetcorn needs a lot of pollination which I suspect is the purpose here – it was two rows of purple tansy for every 6 rows sweetcorn. Or to attract hoverflies which will keep down aphids, or a green manure to enrich the soil for next years crop. Or as a garden plant to support the local bee population. It is originally from the USA and Mexico; it seems to be the same plant as the Scorpion weed I saw mentioned on some US websites? It looks similar but those sites were full of dire warnings about the nasty rash that plant can produce. The British websites mentioned its prettiness and usefulness to bees, and that it might produce a rash in some sensitive people. Does the cooler climate of the UK reduce that particular chemical? Inquiring

minds would like to know.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. Genesis 8:22