

## **Brian Wainwright**

Brian farms at Parkhouse Farm, Meerbrook. In this part of the interview with Sheila Hines, in January 2017, Brian discusses the work that he and his wife, Noreen did in the early years of the Environmentally Sensitive Area ESA scheme and the benefits that traditional farming can have for the environment and wildlife.

### **Part Two. Environmental Schemes**

SH: You went into ESA schemes when they were....?

BW: Yeah, we did, we went big into that.

SH: Was it just initially for the money or because you were interested in it?

BW: I didn't go into it straight away, it was Charlie Fernyhough next door here, he said you ought to be in it, there's money to be had, so I went in to it. I think it were early 90s when we went into it. Because I'd met Noreen, she pointed out how special it is round here and what we've got, so that made me see we had got something special and we went more into the ESA and that kind of farming sensitively for the environment. And also Noreen wrote about it. We had the lapwing project on the top ground, we did 6 scrapes for the lapwings and Noreen wrote about it. That was in The Countryman, and because of that it was the start of bits and pieces that Noreen wrote about and got us onto Radio 4 Farming Today programme where Rebecca Skidmore came out and interviewed me in some traditional hay meadow that we'd got.

SH: What benefits did you see while you were in the ESA?

BW: The benefits on the farm, I suppose I like to see traditional fields with various flowers, harebells and all that kind of thing. Lapwings and skylarks are supposed to have declined but we've got skylarks here just same as always on the top ground. We've got the gorse area on what we call the Middle Parks. We've got Middle Parks and Top Parks. Middle Parks is all gorse, excellent habitat for linnets. I suppose it's not actually a benefit for the farm, but it's what I like to see, that's why we do it, or why we have done.

SH: But we need to be bio diverse if possible, we all benefit in the end.

BW: Yeah, I suppose your wildlife needs all them various types of habitat.

SH: So when your ESA scheme finished, you carried your conservation on a bit?

BW: We were in entry level scheme. We were in a traditional hay meadow scheme and we got the lapwing project.

SH: How many traditional hay meadows have you still got?

BW: I did plough 7 times during the '90s, but there still the traditional, but some have never been ploughed. They've got lots of ox-eye daisies and vetchling and all kinds of stuff in them.

SH: Do you find you can have those and still farm satisfactory?

BW Yeah, I think so, you need some of that herbal stuff, it's all good stuff for your cattle.

SH: Have your schemes finished?

BW: We were out of it and for some reason didn't bother going back into it.

SH: If you had the opportunity now would you take it up again?

BW: It depends on the rules, I can't remember why we come out of it now. I think it came to an end. There was a lot of people dropped out of it anyway or it was some kind of new scheme and didn't get taken up like they thought it would do.

SH: But to keep the environmental options going you think it needs funding?

BW: Yeah, I think so. And making simpler or farmers won't take it on? The old ESA schemes were quite user friendly.

SH: Have you got much vermin?

BW: I suppose badgers run about. I suppose they class deer as vermin but it's nice to see the deer. I see as many as 30 deer. I suppose there would usually be 4 or 5 stags about. It's nice to see 'em. On the road side they've knocked all the fence down and made holes in the walls. Summer time when it's mowing time, especially down the wood, they flatten the grass where they lie in it. We have got badgers about. We just have to hope we stay clear of Tb.

SH: Obviously, nowadays there's lots of regulations that affect us. What sort of things affect you either in a good or bad way? I am thinking especially of NVZ regulations that are coming back in.

BW: With NVZs we are still on the traditional farm yard manure, we're not on slurry at all. There isn't a cubicle on the place, it's all loose housed on straw, so there isn't the spreading restrictions with that. I believe it's best for the land. We do use a bit of fertiliser, but not very much at all. Some years where we don't use any. It's the most natural thing, rotted down bedding muck. I always think what you put on this year does good next year, that's how I think it works like.

SH: With you having to buy quite a lot of straw.

BW: You might think it's a lot of straw, I usually buy 6 loads of straw for the winter or one load a month, that's how it works out, but then cows eat some as well, cows look well.

SH: Do you find now straw prices are affected now that straw is taken off to be burnt as biomass?

BW: It might be, yeah. I think it's a bit more expensive than you would think it would be. As you say they do take a lot for burning.

SH: Which is putting the price up isn't it. And effectively that's subsidised, isn't it?

SH: Do you still have to keep the same paper work for the NVZs with having farm yard manure?

BW: You still have to keep the records of when you go muck spreading, I can see them rules coming in. I've always kept records of what muck goes on what field when, just kept the records just the same.

SH: And do you find any of the other regulations difficult?

BW: I suppose that's how it is now, regulations. You got to keep the regulations or it's not acceptable if you don't keep the regulations. It's not been too bad.

SH: You're coping with it.