The Thursday Sheet

Two stories, four columns, and a reading order of their own.

The bridge reopens

The bridge reopened on Tuesday, eleven months after the river took the middle of it. The county surveyor walked the deck at dawn and declared it sound, which is the only ceremony anyone asked for. Traffic crossed within the hour. What took the eleven months was not the deck but the two piers under it, each rebuilt from the bed up while the water ran round them. The contractor counted nineteen days lost to the weather and none at all to the design, which is a rarer thing than it sounds. The old approach road stays shut until the spring, so

The harvest, county by county

The wheat came in ten days early and heavier than anyone had allowed for, and the barns of three parishes were full before the second week of August. The dry June is what did it, say the growers, and the wet April before that. Not every field agrees: the high ground east of the ridge lost a third of what it stood to a wind that came through on a single afternoon. The merchants have held their price so far, which nobody expects to last past the sales, and the millers are already asking what the winter sowing will look like on ground this hard.

The harvest, county by county (continued)

The straw is the other half of the story: there is a great deal of it, it is dry, and the men who bale it have been working the fields two counties away as well as their own. Two of the larger farms have put their second cut off a fortnight in the hope of rain. The weighbridge at the co-operative has been open since six every morning and the queue at seven is longer than it was last year at nine.

The bridge reopens (continued)

the lorries still go the long way round by the mill. The parish council has asked for a footway on the upstream side and been told it will wait its turn. Meanwhile the bus takes four minutes off its run and the school on the far bank has moved its bell back to where it stood before the flood. Nobody has yet said what becomes of the temporary crossing downstream, which cost more to keep open than to build and which the anglers would like left where it is.