

John Lycett's blog – August, 2024

Here I am standing on the Cliffe, where the old Home Guard Hut used to be, looking across over Packwood Haugh School, towards Wykey.

Harvest began in the middle of July. First up was the winter barley, then the rape and finishing with the wheat.

Average yields were down but not as much as was anticipated. Other than the weather, the ban on neonicotinoids had a big effect on the rape crop. Increased resistant weeds (e.g. rye grass) in the wheat crop, together with global grain price volatility, are some of the recent challenges faced by the farm.

The straw baling team, owing to the weather again, are having a tough time turning these big swaths to get the straw dry enough to bale.



When this photo was taken, Steve was halfway through the wheat harvest but, as you can see, the benefits of the GPS system mean that, wherever he is in the field, a full swath is taken. This obviously enables him to increase his output.

Allow me to reminisce - if I think back to the 1950s, a neighbour of my uncle had a Massey Harris 726 combine and the bed was lifted by a big wheel. You pulled it back to lift and pushed it forward to lower. This combine came from Canada in boxes and was assembled on the farmyard.



My uncle then purchased an International B64 trailed combine (left). The tractor driver in the photo is my cousin Geoffrey Cornes and on the bags are his brother, Frank, and Tom Wagstaff, who went on to drive a lorry for Annscroft Haulage. Coincidentally, during his time at Annscroft Haulage, he hauled sugar beet and grain from the farm for many years.

Now, Steve, with his New Holland combine and his MacDon 41ft header, can combine more in one hour than what was done in a day back then.

Cover crops

Sam & Steven have been drilling cover crops, main stubble turnips for sheep keep, Steven has also sown one block of mustard for green manure.

Digestate

Connor has been spreading liquid digestate on the fields where the straw has been cleared.

Drying

We mustn't forget George, who with Steven & Luke have been drying and cooling the grain on the drying floors and putting it into store.

Winter feed

High dry matter energy beet, washed and de-stoned, will be available from about the 20th September until next May. Also, there may be some grain maize.

Thinking ahead



There are quite a few robotic solar panelled seeders and weeders (left) in this county, one of which I recently saw working, but how long before we see one of these (below)?



Farming never stops!