

John Lycett's blog - February 2024

Today, I've been dropped off at Queen's Park Farm so I am going over the railway line, down the Moss Meadow farm track, past the solar panels and the lagoon, mulling over what has been happening this month.

There are two things that come to mind immediately. Firstly, the abundance of bright white snowdrops. They certainly made a wet month more bearable. Secondly, what a relief to get slurry on some of the lighter land because the lagoon was getting towards capacity.

Sam and Steven have visited the local school with a tractor and loader to entertain and inform the children for an hour or so as part of their 'Peoples who Help us Week'.

Simon, John and I went to a Berry's breakfast meeting. We were told about environmental schemes, diversification and much more.

Spraying



Agrifac Vanguard Sprayer

"**Vanguard**, I know you've got your wheels dirty; I know you're chomping at the bit to get back out in the fields, but you must be patient.

Mark, the agronomist, has sent you lots of recommendations but you must wait a while, the ground is just too wet to travel."

Woodchip



George has been clearing up the woodchip on the drying floor because this work could finish this week. He has been drying up to 200 tonnes/week from wet.

While I'm on the yard, Dilys's (the anaerobic digester) feedstock is maize, chicken manure, rye and sugar beet, washed down with whey.

This is producing 1.9 MW. I'm hoping Sam will tell you more about the solar panels, the ground heat sourcing and the anaerobic digester later in the year.

Steve, Mark and one other have been hauling out solid digestate and bringing return loads of chicken manure.

Sheep



Sheep are coming to the end of grazing the cover crops. They have had a really wet and miserable winter, so their feed is being supplemented with feed barley and energy beet, so they should be market ready in good condition.

Last week I was invited to Harper Adams University by a fourth-year agriculture student, Eleanor Gilbert, who showed me round.

Harper Adams is a far cry from when I became farm foreman there in 1965. The farm has doubled in size since then. There are still cows, sheep and pigs but the old poultry unit looks a bit dilapidated. There appears to be a lot of different projects happening, including a small vineyard. The small percentage of the farm that remains is now run commercially.

Back home, I am hoping for a drier March so that the team can push on with the work.