



John Lycett's blog – May 2025

I'm up on The Cliffe again, not far from the bench erected in memory of local farmer, Brian Oakley.

I'm reminiscing on the past 58 years, since I came to Ruyton.

There have been big changes in the rural landscape. In those days, on every farm there was a dairy herd of varying sizes. There was sugar beet, combinable crops, a few acres of potatoes and pasture. There were still tractors without cabs.

Today, all eight of the local dairy herds have long gone. They were mainly Friesians but in fact, in the early sixties there was a disposal sale at the Beam House of Red Poll dairy cows and the neighbouring farm was the very successful Claybury Herd of Friesians, also gone.

From where I am now sitting, I see much larger fields and much, much larger farms.

I am looking at broiler chicken sheds, big grain stores and an anaerobic digester. One local farmer has a Wagyu beef unit and I can also see a Farm Shop.

I can see carrots and energy crops such as beet and hybrid rye. I can see lucerne, oilseed rape but I can still see combinable crops, larger acreages of potatoes and some pasture.

The pioneer in broiler chickens in this area was a farmer called Bill Hitchen from Kinton, Nesscliffe who had some in the late 1950s/early 60s. They were very primitive sheds with soil floors and very little heating and seemed to me to be totally unsuccessful, so didn't last long.

Today's modern broiler houses, with about 43,000 birds can cost anything up to £1,000,000.

Back to the present - Mark Taplin who does the farm agronomy, from Harvest Agronomy Ltd has penned a few words here about the crops now:



Energy Beet



Winter Beans

"Crops are appreciating the break from the unusually warm dry spring with some welcome rainfall, albeit typically patchy.

Spring planted crops are generally coping with the conditions very well, it is the autumn/winter planted crops that have suffered most, particularly on the lightest soils.

Other challenges for the crops are typical for the weather conditions, favouring insects which are abundant.

The wet weather diseases, which are usually most troublesome for us to manage, are conspicuous by their absence at the moment.

There is still a long way to go before harvest, although most of the key interventions have now been made.

The rest is down to sunshine and some rain.”

JL

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