

John Lycett's blog – January 2026

Some time in the next twelve months, I will have been employed by, and involved with, W H Gittins & Sons for sixty years but I realise that I have been associated with Wykey Farm itself for 63 years. Where has the time gone?

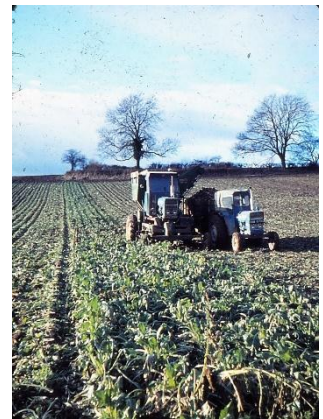
So, let us reminisce. In the 1960s and early 70s, the cows the were milked in a four-point parlour. The milk was taken to the local dairy in churns by tractor and trailer. The cows grazed a lot of small pastures around the village.

The potatoes were lifted with a Massey Disc lifter 711. Sometimes they were put in one cwt bags and carted off the field. Other times, they were elevated into a trailer in bulk.



There was a large acreage of sugar beet grown, which had to be singled by hand because, at that time, pelleted beet seed was only just becoming available. Once the pelleted was established, it was a whole new ball game.

The beet was harvested with a Peter Standen single row harvester and transported with our own lorry to the sugar beet factory.



Some tractors had no cab and those that had, would have had a Lambourn canvas cab with no windscreen wiper.



On the farm, there was a self-propelled Claas Standard Matador Combine but some nearby farmers still had Claas trailed combines.

The local contractor also had a self-propelled Clayson and Claas combines.



In the late 60s, early 70s, the big drive was to remove hedges and ditches and fell trees, all in the pursuit of creating larger fields. The fields were also drained where needed.

To accomplish this, the man to go to was Frank who drove the Drott bulldozer for the local contractor and, in those days, you could still get gelignite from the local quarry. Many tree stumps were blown up in this way.

On Baggymoor, all the hedges and ditches were removed, a lagoon was dug and a pumping station installed to pump the water out into the river. When it came to the crops, because it was peat land

and red shank grew vigorously, the man from ICI built us an inter row sprayer with vibro-jets. On the front of the tractor, we had a band sprayer and, on the back, the inter-row sprayer which did away with the scuffle. We were really ahead of the time as it was many years later before inter row sprayers became more commonplace.

As the potato enterprise expanded, we had a Sellar Pickerton Stone Separator from Scotland, which meant that the two row unmanned potato harvester could come into play.

That's enough reminiscing for now...

The winter wheat and the oilseed rape are looking good up to now. There is also some feed wheat and milling wheat being loaded out of store but the price of both feed and milling wheat are below the cost of production.

The LAMMA Show at the NEC was attended by Stephen, Luke, Sam and George. Their comments were that it was very well attended, there was a good vibe and they found the Croptec Hall very interesting.

During January, Storm Goretti caused branches to come down but, thankfully, with no serious damage. The rainfall for January was 67mm, the normal average being 59mm.

Farming has never been as static as it is now, so we have to continue to adapt, respond and evolve.

Fingers crossed, spring is around the corner.