

John Lycett's blog – July 2026

A 'big up' to all the farmers today and every day! We would all be hungry without you!

I am going to mention this year's harvest. It started eleven days earlier than it normally does.

Steve started the harvest on the hottest day for fifty years, combining some barley which was crimped for cattle feed.

Barley straw prices in some areas this year have made almost as much as the grain.

My first harvest in the 1940s was riding on a binder to check that the sheaves were tied and if I missed one, Uncle George would not be pleased, to say the least!

If I fast forward to the 1980s, we were all chasing higher yields and by September 2015, Rod Smith from Northumberland, had harvested 16.25 tonnes to the hectare. In our case, yields seem to have plateaued but some of the better soils competed well with the drought and yielded 9.27 tonnes to the hectare @ 13% moisture. The average overall yield is 7.46 tonnes per hectare. If all fields had yielded like the best, there could have been another 1000 tonnes in the grain store!

Grain prices have spiked almost hourly lately making it very difficult to hit the highs but easy to get the lows when selling. Apart from the drought, this is also because Mr Putin has made it very difficult due to military tensions and maritime attacks in the Kerch Strait and Azov-Black Sea basin.

Of course, to add to it, the other trouble spot, the Strait of Hormuz, has affected fuel prices and fertilizer prices.



Second cut lucerne.

Every little helps this year.

Steve Smith at the helm. Mark Pitcher on grain haulage.

Steve tells me that he finished combining on Sunday, 2nd August, and he is already planning his cropping this autumn, so that he can do it all again!



I have recently had a short trip to Scotland, travelling to the Isle of Bute and then across to Montrose on the east coast. Very little harvesting had been done anywhere else, and the rape had only just been burnt off, but on the A935 between Brechin and Montrose, there was such diverse cropping. I saw raspberries, strawberries, blackcurrants being harvested, cabbage, bulbs, leeks, potatoes, oilseed rape, wheat and barley, all within the space of 20 miles.

I must say the whole area looked full of potential yield whereas in Shropshire what we had left behind was various shades of toast

Congratulations to Sophie Bayliss on completing her fundraising for Shropshire Rural Support and the Welsh Air Ambulance by attempting to climb Kilimanjaro. Well done, Sophie!