

The farming year



KAREN FISKE

CANARY GRASS BEING COMBINED



Once again the good old British weather has had a huge impact on the outcome of this year's harvest. So much can hang on the timing of rain and sun. During the spring of 2012 we had rain, that was good but then the sun never really came out enough.

HARVEST

The wheat stood tall and straight, the ears bunched together looking full of promise. Combines rolled and as the first tankful was emptied into the trailer we felt just a little smug, the conditions were perfect. When a hopeful arm was lowered into the trailer to take a sample the smugness turned into disbelief, the grains had been starved of sun and were small and shrivelled, they weighed half of what they should, not a complete disaster but very disappointing. Thankfully only some soil types had

been affected, and as most farms have several different ones, generally all was not lost. We are a few hundred tonne down on last year with the wheat, the Oil Seed Rape did better than ever before and we grew Canary Seed for the first time and that did really well. So we can only complain a little bit, put into perspective other parts of the country were far worst off, and some parts of the world ravished by drought and flood have lost far more. In the USA 80% of agricultural land has been badly affected by drought, this is fanning the flames of a tight global feed (animal) grain market. This coupled with other events, including the Eurozone crisis and the unusual weather patterns in Europe, are taking their toll on the grain markets, this can only mean one thing, higher prices in the shops.



ROWING UP HAYLAGE
LEFT: HAYLAGE MAKING IN DEBDEN



BALING AND WRAPPING HAYLAGE



UNLOADING WHEAT

DRILLING

Autumn brings us shorter days, and as the leaves turn our attention changes to preparing the crops for next year. The oil seed rape is drilled first in September, then by the end of the month we start the wheat. This year we have good conditions for drilling, with a bit of moisture and some lovely sunny days.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

We are now in the sixth year of our contract with Natural England and DEFRA, and we have watched the farm change, becoming a joint venture between commercial farming and a genuine care for the environment and wildlife. We started with mainly just grass margins surrounding the arable fields, creating a buffer between the crop and its strict regime and the hedgerows with its fragile ecosystem. We have changed and expanded some




LEFT: DRILLING WHEAT
BELOW: SEAGULLS FEASTING ON NEWPORT WORMS
BOTTOM: RAKING STUBBLE



of these grass margins to pollen and nectar mix or wild bird mixes, designed to give all the birds food throughout the winter. These mixes are full of a variety of plants which can withstand most of the winter weather, including kale, buckwheat, sunflower seed, triticale and millet. Many more 'field corners' have been put down to grass and then left untouched, within






BYFORD FARM SERVICES

SUPPLIER OF
HAY STRAW & HAYLAGE

COMPLETE PADDOCK MAINTENANCE

Tel. 01799 541538 Mobile 07850 230466

www.byfordfarmservices.com



National Association of Agricultural Contractors member

WORK

crops we have been leaving 'skylark plots' where the drill had been lifted for a few meters to leave a bare patch for these shy birds to make a home, just as they like it. Some of these areas we have had to fence just to keep walkers dogs out, a dog running regularly through these sanctuaries can do more damage than you realise, so a plea to keep your dogs on leads, thank you!

UNWELCOME VISITORS

We felt very patriotic this year, the Union Jack Flag has been flown proudly on many gateways, in cars, on clothes and even food, (don't forget to buy British!) and been waved on many occasions during this fantastic Jubilee and Olympic year. Our own flag looked stunning flying on a pole at the entrance to our farm, it would still be there had someone not snapped the pole and stolen it.

Rural areas are always targets for

theft, metal is popular due to the high scrap prices. Diesel is almost as expensive as liquid gold so needs to be kept locked away, lawnmowers and quad bikes are easy to move on as are tools and saddles. Sadly we are all possible victims, so be vigilant and report suspicious activity to the new police non-emergency number 101. **NN**

RIGHT: SPECIAL COVER
FOR WILD BIRDS
BELOW: THE SUN SETTING ON
ANOTHER SUMMERS DAY



Hilberys

For all your landscaping needs...

WE SELL MORE THAN JUST TURF!

✓ Pea Shingle	✓ Ballast
✓ 20mm Stone	✓ Fencing
✓ Sand	✓ Grass Seed
✓ Top Soil	✓ Garden Clearances
✓ Bark Mulch	✓ Grass Cutting

Suppliers & Installers of Quality Turf, Topsoil, Aggregates & Fencing
Tel: 01799 540009 www.hilberturf.co.uk