

# 1975

In terms of output it has been a good year. However, on the financial side we shall have done rather worse than last year for two important reasons; prices have remained roughly the same as while costs have risen by 20%. In addition to this we have continued to reinvest substantial amounts in the shape of a new 150' x 105' barn, the grainstore for 800 tons of wheat and much new equipment. One encouraging feature has been the fact that the farm seems once again to be regaining its reputation as one of the more progressive in the country. Our experiments with the NIAE bridge linkage, use of large equipment and general expertise in seed production have created considerable interest in the farming press and television.

## CEREALS (1450 acres)

It was no small achievement being able to drill 800 acres of winter corn before the end of November last year in an autumn which was the wettest in living memory. This fact, coupled with a great deal of spraying for mildew, rychnosporium and aphids, seems to have paid dividends because the yields of all the winter corn were considerably above the average of this area. Even the Maris Fundin, which seemed to have difficulty with weed competition, managed in one case to give 44 cwt with a seed rate of only 56 lbs per acre. It is easy to forget that until three years ago this would have been considered exceptional by any standards. The Hobbit was particularly encouraging with 57 cwt to the acre and next year we shall be growing 200 acres of this variety. The winter barleys also did very well with Maris Trojan giving over 2 tons and the Otters averaging about 37 cwt over 300 acres - and also managing to provide excellent malting samples. In contrast the spring barleys were somewhat disappointing with only Maris Mink (2 tons per acre over 200 acres) being really impressive. Mazurka and Aramir were somewhat disappointing, as was Varunda, and Berac was poor enough to ensure that we shall not be growing it again. This year our new varieties will be Sonja, a heavy yielding winter barley for feeding, and Ark Royal which is supposed to combine very heavy yield with excellent malting qualities. If it lives up to its reputation it will be grown here for many years.

## SUGAR BEET (300 acres)

Not quite the disaster of last year but with a yield which will not be much more than 8 tons per acre (and probably less) there is little question that we have lost money on this crop for the second year running. Four applications of aphid sprays in addition to the normal herbicides did much to increase the cost and in spite of this we suffered badly from virus yellows. The only bright spot was the fact that the beet were cleaner than they have been for some time. We may well have lost our position as champion fatten growers in the Eastern Counties - a distinction we can well do without.

## HERBAGE SEED (52 acres)

The very high prices of the last two years have now resulted in a worldwide

glut which, coupled with the downturn in livestock fortunes, has meant there is now enough herbage seed in this country to supply two years' needs. As a result the price of seed has collapsed from last year's £22.50 per cwt to £7.50. We shall not be growing any more until the situation improves in two year's time. Yields this year appear to have been around 6 cwt per acre

#### CROP DRIER (400 acres lucerne)

Our target of 1000 tons in 1500 hours was completely impossible due to the dry summer and shortage of lucerne. In the end we managed to produce about 700 tons in 800 hours which was better than most driers of this size in England. Without lucerne the position would have been desperate since grass stopped growing in early July and did not start again until late September. One slight consolation was that because of the dry conditions the amount of fuel used was far lower than we had been anticipating.

#### HAY AND SILAGE (60 acres grass)

Excellent quality but not much quantity. This must have been the best haymaking year ever.

#### MAIZE (30 acres)

We attempted to grow maize for grain this year. The less said the better, other than the fact that we shall not be growing any next year.

#### MUSTARD (30 acres)

The price was down to £100 per ton and the yield was surprisingly poor at 8 cwt per acre. Next year the price will probably be even worse and we may well try Linseed instead.

#### LIVESTOCK (400 head)

After many years in the doldrums there are definite signs that the dairy unit is picking itself up off the floor, due entirely to the youth and enthusiasm of the livestock staff. A pretty tough culling policy has been helped by the fact that during the summer it was possible to cull and buy in good cows for similar prices, a phenomenon which will not happen often. The mastitis cell count is less than half last January's figure and is now below the national average. The herd average milk yield hovers around 700 gallons and still rising. We shall be happy when it reaches 800 gallons. The beef unit has been expanding rapidly and now consists of 65 suckler cows and a total of 200 head of stock. Prices will be good next spring and we shall be selling a considerable quantity.

#### WEATHER

An extraordinary year. The rain continued (with the exception of February) until April and then proceeded to remain dry until the end of October. Snow on June 2nd gave way to the hottest summer on record. From the time we started drilling sugar beet until we had finished 900 acres of autumn corn

there was not a single day on which no outside work could be done.

## MACHINERY

The following new equipment was purchased this year:- 2 Class Dominator 85 combines, 3 Ford 5000s, one Sanderson SB55 rough-terrain forklift truck, one 4 metre Roterra power harrow, one Bridge Linkage and a 12' levelling harrow.

## THE FUTURE

After two years during which we have invested more than £200,000 in such things as the crop drier, grainstore, new barn, two combines, ten tractors and a large amount of equipment, we shall now draw our horns in a bit and consolidate rather than continue to expand. Thus even if we encounter one or two poor years we should now be well enough equipped to survive without having to spend a lot of money. We do intend to build a new office at the grainstore next year and eventually to move the workshop there so that all of the main activities will be grouped in a single location. Looking further ahead it is hard to see the future pattern of farming. New legislation governing taxation, not to mention Tied Cottages (or what the NFU would like to call Service Houses) may well change us more than we imagine. Machinery will continue to get bigger and more expensive and this will mean that our standards of maintenance will have to improve. But overall the future must be good because if this farm does not flourish then neither will British Agriculture. It is perhaps lucky that we produce food and not cars or washing machines.