

# Shoreham Gazette

## Farming Notes – August 2011

Just as it got dark yesterday evening, Saturday 20th August, David finished combining our last field of barley and Alistair tipped the final trailer load into the grainstore. This afternoon, I completed the drying of all the grain and switched off the grain drier for the last time this season - with a sense of relief and release, after many hours spent drying virtually every ton harvested. The first swathe of oilseed rape had been clipped exactly 4 weeks earlier and since then the whole team had been working long hours, whenever the weather was favourable, gathering in the harvest.

What a strange growing season it has proved to be! The exceptionally dry spring was followed by lots of rain in June, then by cloudy, sometimes damp days through July and August. Although there were days when rain prevented both lavender cutting and cereal combining, which was frustrating at the time but we had no extended holdups this year. With everything safely gathered in those all important crop yields can now be calculated. Different crops have fared very differently this year and I list a summary of my own results:-

Lavender oil – down on last year, but nevertheless a reasonable yield.

Oilseed Rape – variable field to field but generally very good yields.

Grass Seeds – dreadfully poor, worst yield for years.

Wheat (on moisture retentive soils) - much better than expected with above average grain yields and decent bread making quality.

Wheat (on thinner, chalky soils) – very different, with low grain weights and straw yields.

Beans – terrible result, best forgotten.

Barley – a decent quantity and great malting quality.

Today has been wonderfully sunny so I felt that I should write these notes in relaxed mode in the garden, but it is merely an intermission because tomorrow we start cutting hop bines for decorative selling and plan to sow the first field of oilseed rape for 2013 harvest.

Looking ahead, our Norfolk Royal apple trees are carrying a big crop, which is now 'colouring up' and developing that distinctive taste and bite. They will certainly be ready to pick from 9th September onwards. (We keep wondering if we should rename this now rare, old vintage variety, "Kent Royal Apples" as we understand that we maintain the only remaining commercial orchard).

William Alexander

24th August 2011