A GUIDE TO THE COUNTRYSIDE:
HAY AND HARVEST

by Hunter Adair

Introduction

The method of making both hay and silage on the farms this century has changed a great deal and has nearly become fully mechanised. This meant that thousands of farm workers had to leave the land and try and find work in the cities.

Many farmers have become independent of farm labour and replaced them with machines and computers. The labour force is still leaving the land, although the rate of pay and working conditions have improved for the farm workers.As the farms have become bigger since about the 1960's and 1970's, due to the amalgamation of many small farms and with the help of the amalgamation grants, many small farms have disappeared and some of these small farms were the basis of young people getting a start to farm on their own.

After a few years of amalgamating a great number of small farms it was discovered that the way the countryside was changing there would be no small farms left in this country. The policy of amalgamating many small and big farms has stopped in most areas.

With vast changes taking place in agriculture many farmers decided to change their farming policy and started to specialise in the various types of farming, rather than having mixed farming. Changing from one type of farming to another may only take a year or so, like changing from stock rearing to growing cereals such as barley, wheat, oats, or oilseed rape.

Making a farming policy change like this, will depend upon the type of land you farm and the buildings and accommodation you have to store the grain and straw. Within two years this type of farming change from stock rearing to cereals can be made quite smoothly.

However, changing a farming policy from cereals to milk production will take much longer than two years. First the grass rotation will have to be planned, then there will be the various building alterations to be made and the installation of a milking parlour and equipment and a milk quota to get. There is also the herd to establish and a breeding policy to be thought out. Depending on the size of the dairy herd that will be established, the fodder and root crops will also need to be planned. Changing from growing cereals to milk production may take several years.

As farmers started specialising in the various types of farming, such as milk, beef production, sheep and stock rearing, extra bulk food also had to be produced to feed the extra stock and this meant growing more fodder like hay, silage, barley and wheat. Some root crops have always been grown. The amount of bulk fodder a farmer will need to feed his stock throughout the winter, will depend a great deal on how hard the winter is, and the quality of the fodder will depend on how well it was made during the spring and summer.

Many farmers run short of fodder during the months of January, February and March, they then supplement the fodder with sugar beet pulp, or barley.Changing the cows diet at this time of year affects the milk quality, especially the solids-not-fat in the milk and particularly if its a summer calving herd. If the herd is calving all the year round then the quality of the milk is not as readily affected.

The herd fodder intake should be calculated at the end of each winter and attempts should be made to make sufficient fodder to see the herd through the winter. A farmer feeding beef cattle running out of winter fodder and changing to feeding other supplements, won't lose the same income as a dairy farmer would, as the dairy farmer is paid on the quality of his milk.

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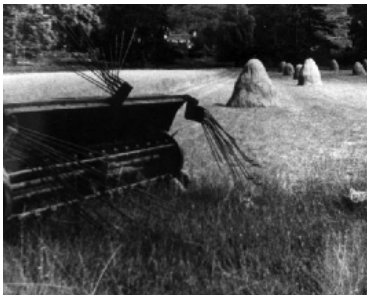

Hay made into rucks or pikes to get it dry

Making hay

The quality of the hay made by farmers every year varies enormously, even if we get a good summer there will always be some farmers that end up with hay that is not fit for burning. The feed value of hay depends primarily on four factors,

1. the time and maturity when the grass is cut,
2. the quality losses in the hay when its being made
3. the person, or persons making the hay,
4. the weather will also decide on the quality value of the hay with regards to its digestibility.

Normally the weather will have the biggest effect on the quality of the hay being made.

Hay making has been going on long before there were any farming improvements. When the Border Shepherds came in around 1760 they used to mow the grass by hand on the hill sides, using a sickle or scythe and then they stored the hay for winter feed. The hay was normally made from meadow grass. During the days of the horses, from around the turn of the nineteenth century making hay has given way on many farms to silage making and root crops, of various types, mainly turnips and kale, or a mixture of kale and turnips which are normally strip grazed in the field.

Before the coming of the hay making machinery, it required a considerable number of both men and women to make hay. Many farmers relied on seasonal labour for hay making, on some big farms up to 100 people could be seen working together, mowing and making hay. Many seasonal workers came from Ireland and some of them would stay at the same farm till the hay harvest was finished then they would move on.

Once the hay had been mowed, it then had to be turned and dried. On many farms hay continued to be turned by hand using a pitch fork, it is still turned on many small farms today by hand.Hay tedders, which shook up the hay to dry it were in use in the south of England particularly around the large towns early last century.

At one time hay was in constant demand for the large livestock populations of the towns and cities. This included not only the cab and dray horses, but also for the great number of cows which were housed and maintained in the city dairies. As the lowland towns expanded in the 18th century, farmers near to them expanded their hay crops for the ready markets to feed the livestock.

When the hay was nearly dry it was they shaken up and left to dry more, then it was rowed up with a horse rake or hand rake and built into small kiles with a fork. These small heaps of hay have various names, such as quiles, hay cocks or coles.

Many times in poor weather the hay kiles would have to be turned over or shaken out again to get the hay dry. After the hay kiles had been weathered for a few days and they were dry, the next stage was to pull about thirty kiles together and build them into a round hay ruck or pike.

The final stage was to bring the hay rucks into the farm stackyard with a low loading hay bogey pulled by a horse, the rucks were winched onto the bogey and the hay was built into stacks at the farm. Most hay stacks were built round but there were also a number of oblong stacks built, known as “Soo Stacks”. The stacks would then be thatched with straw or rushes to keep them dry through the winter.

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Some hay is made into big round bales which are wrapped with a fine strong net

Making hay continued

As farming improvements developed, hay sheds, hay barns and hay lofts were built to store the hay, it was much easier to store hay in a barn than to build a hay stack in the farm yard. A fair amount of hay was stored in lofts above the cattle, this is still done today on many small farms.

The old method of making hay was very hard work involving a lot of people, but the quality of the hay made by hand in many cases was of much better quality than the quality of the hay made today by mechanical means.

As the rotary grass cutter and baler were developed for making hay, it now can be made with very few staff. The quality of much of the hay made today can be very poor in digestibility. The reason for this is that many farmers are in far too big a hurry to get the crop cut, baled and led in, they don't weather the hay enough. Some farmers tell me seasons have changed and they don't get the weather to make good hay.

In the north of England it is very difficult to weather hay much before the second half of June, in some of the dales and on some hill farms the sheep graze the hay pastures till after lambing in April, which means the pastures are not ready to mow for hay till well into July.

Some farmers barn dry their hay, while I see some advantage in this method if its been a very 'bad season, I honestly feel the weather dries hay the best. While barn dried hay may be .economical on a big farm, I can't see how this method of drying hay can be economical on a small farm. If the hay is not weather properly and has a high moisture content, then it will go mouldy and barn drying it will have little effect if the bales are tightly packed.

There is no better fodder for cattle, horses and sheep than good quality hay. If the hay is made within about four days of mowing it and the weather is suitable the hay should contain about 80 per cent of dry matter and have good digestibility. Hay, silage and straw are roughage fodders and are essentially fibrous feeds with around 30-40 per cent of fibre. Cattle, horses and sheep being fed on good quality hay will tend to eat to appetite and cut down on concentrates.

Cut grass stacked in a silage clamp which is then covered with plastic sheeting

Making silage

Over the past thirty years there has been a vast swing by farmers from hay making to silage making and there is now some 80 per cent of dairy farmers in England and Wales making silage. There is a lesser percentage of farmers producing beef making silage, although the tendency is that more beef farmers are changing to silage making to get more bulk fodder.

I have followed this change from hay making to silage making over the years and the reasons for the changes can be fairly simply explained. As many dairy farmers started specialising in milk production, they increased their cow numbers, and cut down on their sheep and beef cattle.

The extra cows had to be fed and rather than grow more hay it was far more economical to feed silage, especially when the farmers could get two or three cuts of grass from the same acreage of land, hence increasing the amount of bulk food and at the same time the cows could self feed themselves from the silage clamps or pits, thus cutting out a lot of labour.

Making silage continued

Making silage is not something new, I can well remember in the late fifties we used to keep one “Eye” in the hay shed, which was a section of the hay shed for silage, this silage was made from grass that was cut for hay but as we couldn’t get the grass properly weathered and dried, because it lay along the side of a wood and some high hedges.

We carted this grass into the hay shed and hand forked it into the “Eye: of the shed. We used an additive in those days, after every layer of grass we put in the hay shed we spread two bucketfuls of black treacle on top of the grass, the idea of the treacle was to help the fermentation of the grass and sweeten the silage.

To seal the silage clamp we stacked a few rows of baled hay on top of the clamp. I can remember the treacle arriving at the farm in forty gallon drums. We made some very good silage which had a dry matter content of between 30 and 35 per cent, it was really good stuff.

The quality of silage made today by many farmers varies so much in quality. The process of making and fermenting silage is relatively quite simple, it involves the conversion of the sugar in the grass to lactic acid, which causes the fermentation and when sufficient lactic acid has been produced, bacterial action stops and provided the air is kept out of the pit, the silage will be preserved as a good quality winter fodder.

To get good quality silage the grass should be cut when the sun is shining on it, as the sun increases the sugar levels in the leafy grass, the grass should then be wilted for some 24 hours or so before being carted into the silage pit. Provided the grass gets no rain on it, then it should turn out as good quality silage.

Farmers checking the moisture of the grass being made for silage

Making silage - more information

Grass that is cut for silage when it is wet has a lower sugar level and a higher moisture level and if the weather then turns sunny, by wilting the grass for some 48 hours there is a chance you can still make it into good silage, but normally when the grass is cut wet it doesn’t make as good silage. The effect of wilting the grass is to reduce the water level in the grass, thus reducing the tonnage ‘of water being carted into the silage pit.

As the grass is carted into the silage pit, it is rolled as it is being filled and sealed as soon as possible. Should a second cut of grass be made several weeks later to top up the pit, then the seal should be removed and the clamp should be topped up with grass, then rolled again as it is being filled and then sealed again.

Should it be an open silo pit, then plastic sheeting will be ideal to provide a good air tight seal and old tyres or five gallon plastic detergent containers filled with water or sand, can be used to lay on top of the plastic sheeting to help to seal the pit from the air. Should the silage pit have a roof over it, then bales of hay or straw can be used to lay on top of the plastic sheeting and the bales won’t get spoiled.

A good number of farmers now use silage additives which can be of some help if the silage is made when the weather is dull or wet.

The use of silage additives is a further cost to silage making and can really be done without if the silage is made on dry sunny weather, even if it means extending the silage making time.

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Making silage continued

There are various types of silage pits, clamps and silos. It costs very little to make a silage pit, if you dig a square trench in a field or bankside and build the soil up around the sides, this will give you a silage pit. the silage can quite easily be sealed with plastic sheeting.

Tower silos are vertical air tight metal containers where the grass is normally chopped and augured in and out the silo. There are also the various walled silage clamps, some are made with steel and railway sleepers, and others have concrete walls and floors. Some of the walled silos have a roof over them. Whatever type of silo a farmer has he must be able to seal in the silage to get good fermentation.

Many farmers now make silage and store it in black plastic bags. Making this type of silage doesn't involve a lot of extra equipment, the big round straw baler is suitable for making this type of silage. A force-end loader is also needed to move the bales around. It is very important to seal the bags properly. A big silage bale can weigh nearly a ton.

There is also a baler which wraps the silage bales with plastic sheeting as it makes the bales. You still need a fore-end loader to handle the bales. A lot of silage is now wrapped in big bales.

The bagged or wrapped silage bales, which are stored on the farms, or in the fields, tend to attract vermin, such as mice, rats, birds and badgers. Rats and mice cause most damage to the silage bags, they chew holes in the bags which lets the air into the bags and the silage then starts to mould. It is very important to set baits for both the rats and mice.

A farmer holding a small sheave of corn

Harvesting cereals

The cultivation of cereals, such as oats, barley and wheat have been grown in this country for many years. The crops are grown for human consumption, as bread and biscuit making, for stock feed and for export.

Oilseed rape is another crop which has also been grown for many years, but not on as regular a basis as the other cereal crops. Oilseed rape is also used for human consumption and for industry.

Oats, barley and wheat produce fairly large grains compared with oilseed rape, which has a very small shiny seed. All the different cereals have their own characteristics and are used in various ways.

Some cereal crops are grown more than others, because they are either used more for cattle food, or are exported. Cereals grow better in rich, well drained soil and grow best in certain parts of the country.

Some farms are more suitable for growing cereals than others. For instance in the Dales, or in some parts of the Lake District, because of the climate and the soil, they are not suitable for growing cereals, they are more suitable for rearing sheep and cattle.However, some farms that are classed as hill farms do grow a few hectares of oats, or barley which is mainly for stock feed. The grain is normally crushed and mixed with protein and fed to cattle or sheep. The yields from the crops on these hill farms are normally much lower than the yields from the lowland farms.

For instance barley grown on a lowland farm will yield between 6 and 7 tonnes of grain to the hectare, where on a hill farm the farmer may only get 5 tonnes of barley from his crop. Not because the lowland farmer is a better farmer than the hill farmer, it's just because of the type of land they both farm, and by the climate and height the hill farm is above sea level. I have seen many changes in farming since the 1950's. The way the farms have become mechanised and the many changes there have been to the growing, harvesting and marketing of cereals.

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Grain being blown into a trailer from the combine harvester

Oats

There seems to be more oats grown in Scotland than there are in England or Wales. In England especially there is much more barley and wheat grown. The rich fertile soil in the south of the country is much more suitable for growing barley and wheat, than the higher districts of Wales and some parts of the north. We used to grow mainly oats on the south west coast of Scotland, which were used to feed the dairy cows, the sheep, hens and the horses. Most of the oats were milled, or crushed and fed to the different types of stock in various ways.

The oats we grew were from a strain called “Potato” which is thought to have come originally from Europe around 1788. The oat straw was every bit as important as the grain, as the straw was used for feeding the dairy cows, the young stock and for bedding down the dairy cows and was also used in the hen houses, the hens used to scratch among it, scattering the chaff all over the hen houses.

Oats are very much different from barley and wheat, as the grain of the oats grow from the branches on the main stock. The branches can be three inches (75.00 mm) apart or more, and the grain spikelets hang from the branches.
We hardly ever grew oats in the same field in succession without a break. When the oats were sown in the spring of the year, grass seeds were then sown just after the oats, the ground was then harrowed and rolled and this would be a grass field the following year. About ever five years or so the same field would be ploughed and sown down with oats in rotation with grass, turnips, potatoes or kale.

As it was mainly all spring oats we grew, the fields being used were normally spread with cow manure in the late autumn and then the ground was ploughed over before the end of the year. The frost used to break up the lumps of soil which made the ground easier to work and harrow the following spring. The best time to cut the corn with the binder, was when the corn grain was just leaving the white milky stage and beginning to ripen. The straw also had a bit green in it then, which was much better for stock feed, than when it was golden ripe.

Most years we also grew a few hectares of oats and broad beans mixed for stock feed. But we couldn’t cut the corn till the beans were ready, and we did lose some corn grain heads with this mixed crop. We grew the beans as a protein for the dairy cows. Both the oats and the beans were milled or crushed and mixed with either flaked maze, cow nuts, or grass nuts to produce a proper balanced concentrate diet for the dairy cows.

Not all the oats were crushed or milled, some of the oats were fed to the hens that were running free. We had five hen houses at the farm, two in the stackyard and three in the field next to the stackyard. With about 50 or 60 hens in each house.The hens were given four buckets full of corn a day, they were either fed in the stackyard, or in the field next to the stackyard. The corn was just scattered on the ground and some of the hens would scratch among it all day.

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Barley is the crop with the long tails or beard. The barley seeds grow in the notches in the main stem

A crop of barley being cut with the combine harvester and filling the trailer with grain

The barley seeds are put through a dryer before being stored

Barley

Barley is very much different from oats and wheat, because barley is the crop which has the heads with the long beard, or long tails and the barley seeds grow on notches from the main stem rather than hanging from the branches as the oats do.

The few hectares of barley we grew would normally follow a turnip, or potato crop, as these two crops would have been fertilised with cow manure and the barley would benefit from the organic residue of the manure. It was never our farming policy to manure the land for barley as we did for oats. I think this was because we didn't grow a crop of barley every year.

The barley straw was also used for feeding the dairy cows, the cows were given a mid-day feed of either oat, or barley straw in the winter when they were tied up in the cowshed. The cows would eat some of the straw and lie on the rest of it, they were also given a feed of hay after both the morning and evening milking.

Most of the cereals grown in the fifties and sixties were all spring crops. I don't think winter cereals were much thought of in those days where I lived. There have been vast changes in the agricultural industry since then, and there now seems to be more winter barley grown, than spring barley.

There have also been some great strides made with the varieties of spring barley in this last 30 years or so. Varieties such as Blenheim, Corniche, Atem, Regatta, doubled and Digger are but a few of the varieties which are now available.
All the spring varieties of barley have their own characteristics. Some varieties you can sow earlier than others, other varieties have longer straw than others and some crops have stiffer straw, with a good grain ear retention, and some crops ripen sooner than others.

The farmer should always ask his agricultural adviser if he decided to try a new spring barley variety, as some varieties maybe better suited to the different soils and the adviser will be able to tell the farmer what
variety would suit his farm.

Malting barley should contain a very high proportion of starch and a small proportion of protein. A few varieties of malting barley such as Corniche, Puffin, Natasha and Pipkin are all accepted malting strains.

The reason why so much winter barley is now being grown, is because farmers were encouraged to expand production when the U.K. joined the common market in 1973. In some parts of the country many hedges were pulled out to make bigger fields, so as more barley could be grown, and the bigger fields suited the modern agricultural machinery.

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Barley - more information

In the north of England sowing winter barley is a great help to many farmers, because it is not as warm a climate in the north and by sowing winter barley around September, or October the crop gets time to germinate and start to grow before the cold wet winter sets in. Another adventure of sowing winter barley, is the farmer gets the crop to ripen sooner. Winter barley crops can be ready for harvesting about mid-July compared with September, for harvesting spring barley.

There will be about six weeks difference in harvesting spring and winter barley and the yields will be similar. So you can see the great advantage to the farmer to grow winter barley. The straw yields will also be similar to the grain yields, between 6 and 7 tonnes to the hectare on lowland farms and slightly less on the hill farms.

Both the grain and straw yields will depend a great deal on the variety of winter barley the farmer decides to grow.

The variety Marinka, has been around since 1986, and has a stiff longish straw, with a good weight of grain, although its a bit late in ripening and is fairly resistance to disease.

The variety Gypsy, gives good yields and ripens fairly early, although its susceptible to the disease mildew. The straw is not all that long and this variety can stand up to some bad weather.

The variety Kira, has a slightly lower grain yield, with an average length of straw. This is a variety which is very resistance to the disease mildew. An all round fairly good cropper. These are a few of the winter barley varieties which I have just picked at random. There are several more, and new varieties are always being developed.

If the farmer wants to save money on chemical sprays, he should look out for the barley varieties with a good resistance to the main crop-diseases, such as Mildew, Yellow rust and Spetoria, which is a leaf disease.

Over 50 per cent of the barley grown in this country is fed to livestock ever year. Some crops are grown as seed barley and the rest is either, sold to the export trade, or sometimes a portion of this barley goes into the E.E.C. intervention scheme, which means the barley is put into a store and left there till a better price is found for the barley.
Farmers that put their barley into intervention have to pay a levy for storing the barley, which is only a few pounds a tonne. The price of barley within the common market is partly governed by the world prices for cereals.

Some years America, or Russia may have a very poor cereal harvest, because they either have a drought, or they have too much rain, which affects the crop yields and the world market prices. America and Russia are not in the E.E.C. They are members of an organisation called GATT and sometimes buy surplus grain from the E.E.C. Some farmers feed young bullocks with barley for beef. The young bullocks are either bred on the farm, or are bought in as young bull calves.The calves are fed on milk for a few weeks, then get fed on as much barley as they can eat, till they are about 12 to 14 months old. The bullocks are then sold as barley beef, mainly on a contract to a butcher, or to any company the farmer has made a contract with. Some hotel groups buy there beef this way.

Most beef farmers feed barley to their cattle in the winter. The barley is sometimes mixed with maze, grass nuts, soya meal, or fish meal, as a balanced diet. Sometimes the beef cattle are fed milled or crushed barley on its own once a day, with as much silage as they can eat.

Most dairy farmers also put barley in the feed mixture for the dairy cows. Some farmers also give the cows a feed of milled or crushed barley in the feed trough during the day, when the cows are housed for the winter.

Barley - more information

Dairy cows don't really want any more than 8 lbs (3.62 kg), of milled or crushed barley a day, because feeding more barley than this may affect the quality of the cows milk, especially the butterfat.

Sheep breeders also use feed barley in a concentrate mix for the sheep. The breeding ewes are normally fed concentrates when they are carrying lambs, and after the lambs have been born. It its a very hard winter most of the hill farmers will give their sheep a feed of hay a day, and maybe concentrates as well.

Remember when you are looking for this growing crop, barley has the long tails, or the long beard on the heads of the grain and is quite easy to identify from the oats or the wheat.

A growing wheat crop. The ear of the wheat grows from the notches on the main stem

Wheat

There is not the amount of wheat grown in this country as barley. There are two or three reasons for this. Firstly wheat is not fed to livestock in the same quantities as barley, and for many years the farmers weren't growing the most suitable varieties of wheat for bread and biscuit making.

There has also been a swing to growing winter wheat over this last 30 years or so, again like barley this suits some north country farmers because of the climate and area they farm in.

A few years ago I was invited to a large bread bakery in Newcastle upon Tyne. This company have a large flour mill in Edinburgh in Scotland, and they make and sell a large variety of breads, which they sell throughout the north of England and in Scotland.The general manager of the company told me, they buy a lot of their milling wheat from Canada, because the wheat is at the right price and the wheat has all the characteristics they need to make good quality breads.

He also said the company couldn't get enough good quality milling wheat in Britain, and that's why they imported wheat from Canada.

Things have changed in this country and many cereal farmers are now growing much more good quality milling wheats, which are suitable for the home market and for exporting.
Two good milling wheats being grown at present are Avalon, which is a very popular wheat variety with millers. This is a fairly early variety, with a good strong stiff straw, which holds the grain well and resist shedding. This variety is also fairly well prone to the leaf disease Septoria.

Merica, is another variety of wheat which has a longer straw than Avalon. Merica also has a slightly heavier weight of grain and is less resistant to crop diseases. Both of these wheat varieties are very good for bread and biscuit making. Because of the large amounts of grain now grown on farms in this country. The straw on some farms has become an embarrassment. Burning straw in the fields has become a nuisance in some areas with the general public, because of the smoke, smell and the danger of setting fire to hedges, trees and other property. From the autumn of 1992 the Government introduced a ban on farmers, stopping them from burning cereal straw in the fields.

Some cereal straw can be treated with ammonia, or an alkali, which will make the straw more nutritious and palatable for stock feed. Most of the straw however is baled and used for bedding.

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A crop of oilseed rape which is used for producing edible oil for margarine, salads and shortenings etc.

Oilseed rape

The cultivation of oilseed rape is not new in the United Kingdom, early in the 18th century from around 1710, and for the next 40 years or more there were two windmills at Devizes in Wiltshire crushing rape seed, producing colza oil.

The oil is very much in demand in the U.K. for lighting and lubrication, the miners lamps were lit with colaz oil. The oil was transported throughout the south west of England and for many years during this period, quantities of colza oil were exported.

In the summer when you visit the countryside you may see, field after field completely covered with yellow flowers. This crop is oilseed rape, the crop has a very strong smell when its in flower, especially when the sun is shining. Oilseed rape is very popular with the bees, the bees will fly miles to collect the nectar from the oilseed rape when it's in flower.

Early in the 19th Century the farming patterns changed in the U.K. and the rape crop fell into decline. Requirements of vegetable oil and protein were in the main supplied by vast shiploads of the various oilseeds, which were imported from all over the world, this continued till shipping became very difficult during World War I, when the rape crop in the U.K. staged a comeback to supplement the home market.

In the north of England it is mainly winter oilseed rape that is grown. Two winter varieties Cobra and Libravo, seem to be quite popular varieties in the north. Cobra is a good yielding crop and is early ripening. Libravo is also a good yielding crop, and has a good disease resistance, but just doesn't seem to perform as well as Cobra. There are other winter oilseed rape varieties on the market which also perform pretty well.

Oilseed rape can yield up to 30 cwts (1524 kg) an acre or 0.40 hectares. To grow oilseed rape it takes a similar degree of management skills to that required for cereals. Oilseed rape grows best on heavier soil and the soil PH should not be less than 6.0, although above average yields of oilseed rape have been obtained on moisture-retaining soil.

Today rape oil is used as edible oil, for margarine, salads and shortenings. A great deal of research work is also going on in Sweden and Canada, to develop both the human and animal feed potential of the crop.

There is a processing plant now in operation in Sweden, producing a protein concentrate from rape seed for human consumption. While in Canada research workers have reported the discovery of an inexpensive method of treating rape seed to produce a light-coloured protein that can be easily processed into a variety of food products, which will have a major advantage for the developing countries.

When you visit the countryside in the summer, around May and June, look out for the fields covered in yellow flowers. Have a closer look on a sunny day and you will hear and see the bees working the crop. The crop also produces this very strong smell when it's in flower. In some fields in the summer they will be covered with blue flowers. This crop will either be linseed oil or lavender.