



DAWNAY NEWS

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Focus on Farming

Farming has been a key activity for the Estates for centuries. To preserve the long-term health of the soil, Wykeham Farms sows a wide variety of crops with grass leys, wheat, potatoes, barley, spring beans and maize grown in rotation. Sowing, cultivation and harvesting are carried out by local contractors, helping to boost the rural economy. Land is also rented out to graziers and other farmers with whom the Estate works in tandem to bring new crops into our rotation. This newsletter highlights the changes in the Estate's farming practices over the last two decades, as well as how we are looking to the future.

The current Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) goes even deeper – quite literally – by championing soil health. Farm Manager David Edwards, who has led the Estate's farming enterprises for more than 20 years, explains how:

Proud custodians of the landscape

Long before terms like 'sustainability' and 'regenerative farming' were coined, Dawnay Estates was protecting and improving its land for the benefit of future generations. Government environmental stewardship schemes now recognise the value of this responsible land management.

Wykeham Farms was awarded its first Countryside Stewardship scheme in 2001 which initially focused on grass margins and filling gaps in hedges to improve nesting sites and insect habitats. This evolved to include pollen and nectar plots, wild bird seed plots to cover the 'hungry gap' of late winter, and grassland creation for lapwings and curlews. Commencing in

2010, Danby Moors Higher Level Scheme provides grants to increase sheep numbers on the moor and thereby improve habitats for birds such as the merlin and golden plover. Recently the North York Moors National Park Trust funded the restoration of a dew pond on the edge of Wykeham Forest for turtle doves, yellowhammers, song thrushes and redstarts.

“one teaspoon of soil can contain more living things than there are humans on the planet. These organisms are a key component of a healthy soil and benefit if plants grow in the soil all year round. We were already sowing cover crops at our own expense to protect the soil underneath, so very much appreciate the SFI funding.”



Cutting Carbon – biofuels and solar

Since 2010 Wykeham Farms have produced 5,405 tonnes of miscanthus. Burnt in place of coal this has prevented over 10,810 tonnes of CO₂ being emitted.

The biomass boiler at Wykeham Abbey supplies 11 properties, fuelled by home grown timber it releases up to 13 times less CO₂ than heating oil - a saving of over 1150 tonnes of CO₂ in the last 7 years.

Solar panels installed at St Helens in the Park in July are on course to produce nearly half the energy consumed on the caravan site – a saving of 28 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year.

The evolution of farming

Farming practices and crop types have dramatically evolved this century. The biofuel Miscanthus grass was first grown on the Estate in 2005, fuelling Drax power station and now Brigg Renewable Energy Plant. A rise in pests means the yellow fields of oilseed rape have been phased out. Most recently, to combat the escalation of blackgrass on heavier clay soils, Wykeham Farms has implemented a two-year grass leys rotation in tandem with dairy farming tenants and neighbours. This helps to control the weed on heavier soils and involves the spreading of livestock manures to improve soil organic matter, which also reduces the use of some man-made fertilisers. By working with others, some of the benefits to the soil health of a livestock enterprise can be brought into the Estate's arable rotation.



Today and tomorrow



Farming may look idyllically rural, but is an industry steeped in modern technology. Satellites map soil types and crop yields, and soil sampling is regularly carried out. Within Estate fields, contractors use self-steering tractors and combine harvesters and variably apply seed and fertilisers to match the crop and soil requirements. *“With the loss of subsidies, fluctuating weather patterns and ever-changing rules and regulations, we need to stay ahead of the curve,”* says David Edwards. *“Fortunately it is now possible to pinpoint areas in the field to a 2cm degree of accuracy, enabling us to spread and sow exact amounts of fertiliser and seed avoiding waste and reducing costs. Going forward, drones and robotic machinery will further push the envelope.”*

Figuring out the future



The value of land goes far beyond its size and crop yield. Its 'natural capital' is being recognised and a Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) initiative looks to calculate its contribution towards combating air pollution and climate change, the benefits to physical and mental wellbeing, and supporting native species.

“GIS mapping software and on-the-ground surveying has enabled us to quantify the natural capital assets of the Danby and Wykeham Estates, the key habitats, wildflower margins, hedgerows and stone walls and trees” says Trainee Surveyor Hannah Wright. *“Coupled with a biodiversity survey, this data places us in a strong position when planning future initiatives to identify opportunities to improve the local environment and increase sustainability.”*

Wykeham Farms – Harvest 2023

“Last weekend we started the wheat harvest on the Estate. With rain forecast we worked into the early hours of Monday morning. Conditions at 2.00am were as good as in the middle of the afternoon, lots of dust and grain coming off at 14.5% moisture.”

David Edwards LinkedIn post. August 2023

Thank you

To David Tyreman as he retires from the Danby Court Leet after 42 years as a Juryman, the last 14 as the Foreman. His son Ben has been sworn in – the 4th generation of Tyremans to serve the Court.

danbycourtleet.co.uk



From the left, Martin Muir, David Tyreman, Lord Downe, Martin Foord

Congratulations Twice!

To St Helens in the Park who have been awarded the prestigious 5 Pennant Platinum Park status and have won 2023 AA Campsite Of The Year – North East England. Well done to Manager Simon Roe and all the team



Well done

To the Dawnay'athlon team whom, over the summer, Hiked, Biked & Swam raising **£11,701** for three local charities.

Steve Dees retires

Steve Dees is hanging up his chisel after 46 years. Moving to Wykeham as a child, when his father became stockman at Ings Farm, Steve joined the Estate's Maintenance Team in May 1977 after a 5 year joinery apprenticeship. Steve's carpentry skills are renowned and it is probable that every house on the Estate will have had a bespoke door, gate or window made and fitted by him at one time. But equally Steve's contribution to the Estate over the years cannot be over emphasised, acting when needed as security guard, driver, bailiff and always on call for countless emergencies from flooding to escaped sheep. Steve's knowledge of the Estate properties, especially Wykeham Abbey is infinite, knowing the location of every stop tap and manhole and pipe run; he is irreplaceable and will be sorely missed.



Time-travelling teams save Scarborough



The dry land activities at North Yorkshire Water Park have been extremely popular this year. A brand new immersive Escape Room now joins the puzzle rooms, archery, axe-throwing, zip wire, climbing tower and low ropes experiences. Guests are transported back in time to 1918, when World War

its RAF 251 Squadron West Ayton was stationed where the aquapark now stands. In just one hour, teams must use their wits to prevent German U-boats bombarding the Yorkshire coast.

"Businesses in particular enjoy these 'whatever-the-weather' team-building options," says General Manager Gareth Davies.

"Our two identical puzzle rooms pitch two teams against one another. In this new race against time, people need to work together, which is perfect for corporate bonding. Budding Sherlocks can then refuel with a team lunch in our private lakeside dining room, and of course, Christmas menus are available."



Dawnay Estates

The Estate Office, Wykeham, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO13 9QD
Tel: 01723 866600
www.dawnay.co.uk @ in



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ST HELENS
CARAVANS, PODS & CAMPING