

MGA TIMES

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MGA R & D 2002

MGA Demo's & Trials Underway

We are pleased to inform members that we have now established 11 farmer demonstration sites on members farms this year, the sites are located in the following areas: -

1. Berkswell, Near Coventry
 2. Ashburton, Devon
 3. Lostwithiel, Cornwall
 4. Midhurst, West Sussex
 5. Dyfed, Wales
 6. Attleborough, Norfolk
 7. Barnsley, South Yorkshire
 8. Ticknall, Derby
 9. Moreton Valence, Gloucester
 10. Pilling, Lancashire
 11. Darlington, Country Durham*
- * Organic site of best practice

The following demonstrations have been set up to investigate the effect of: -

- Row widths
- Inter-row cultivation
- Mixed varieties
- Seed dressing - 2 drilling dates.

Sites had been drilled with Simon Draper's variety choices in order to give a range of maturity dates, which should provide a good talking point at meetings to be held on the farms during the year.

In addition, we are undertaking the following small plot trials: -

- Weed control in maize
- Starter fertiliser & drilling times
- Fertiliser application and scorch - the affect on yield dependent on timing of application.

MGA Ruminant work includes the additive beef trials being undertaken at CEDAR and the wholecrop dairy and beef trials being undertaken at Harper Adams.

NEW MGA CHAIRMAN

Introducing Charles Moore, MGA Chairman ...

I am the youngest of four children. My father and mother were small farmers who produced and delivered their milk, cream, eggs, poultry and pig meat directly to the consumer or the local butcher. The 25 cows and milk round and my mother's paying guests, supported the four of us at private school and employed local labour. They were doing then what we are being urged to do now, without the high levels of bureaucracy! They also managed (with our help) to set up a daughter and three sons on their own farms. I left school at fifteen full of enthusiasm to farm.

I married Jane in 1973. She practiced dentistry from our farmhouse until recently but has now diversified into training and mentoring fellow professionals. We have four adult children: Kristina (27) is a broadcast journalist currently working for Carlton TV in Nottingham. She is engaged to be married in October this year - our first wedding! Kyla (25) is an Architectural and Environmental Engineer currently working with a French oil company in the North Sea. John (20) has a year in industry working in Australia having completed two years of three at Coventry University, studying 'International Disaster Engineering & Management' (I tell him he will be qualified to run the farm!). Richard (18) is wrestling with 'A' levels and has a place at Manchester (UMIST) to read Software Engineering. Our farm is unlikely to have a farming successor!

We bought our current farm in 1978 and converted it into a dairy unit (with the help of an FHDS scheme) and built up a herd of 140 cows and followers. In 1969 I had visited Boston Mass and was introduced to the benefits of maize feeding. Even in this marine climate this farm is not 'grassy' but does lend itself to cereal production and even at 450' we can grow a reasonable crop of maize.

In the early eighties I was involved with the local NFU and tried without success to persuade government not to withdraw the independent advice and near market research that was freely available at the time. Since then the industry have looked to commercial organisations for guidance, especially the smaller family farms that I represent. I remain convinced that the most expensive advice is that delivered by well meaning salesmen. This is why I have been a member of MGA since it was formed.

I have taken a keen interest in environmental issues as I firmly believe that poor practice by some growers will inevitably lead to further unpopular legislation (I hasten to add that these people are not among our membership). It is also, sadly, where funding streams are much more likely to be found for research projects. With a cost structure that is much too high it is going to be extremely difficult for our industry to compete, unless there is an enormous swing in exchange rates or government attitude. We are told that we should either become organic or join one of the cosmetic environmental schemes that currently exist, as if that is a panacea for sustainable competitive agriculture.

Last year our farm was surrounded by FMD, with many of my neighbours being culled. The stench of the pyres, and the very difficult operating conditions that prevailed were bad enough, but I found that being treated as a second-class citizen by ignorant bureaucracy was more than I was prepared to bear. After a lot of soul searching we decided to help re-stock one of our neighbours with the herd. A great shame as we have a nice little up to date unit with potential for expansion. I find that my own enthusiasm for dairying has been damaged beyond repair. On the bright side Jane and I are now able to have more time to spend travelling together. I also belong to the local Rotary club, which is great fun. Our major fund raising this year was for the FMD appeal, which totalled £6000.

My enthusiasm for MGA is as strong as ever. I find the forward thinking members inspirational which brings me to thanking David for his youthful enthusiasm and energy he has put into MGA over the last 12 months as Chairman.

I wish members luck through these difficult times. Please feel free to contact me with any problem or idea you may have relevant to the MGA.

Charles Moore

Have you registered yet?

www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk

We would like to remind members that the MGA's Website is now up and running, featuring all MGA information; mailings, agronomy updates from Simon, automated Nitrogen Predictor service etc.

Members who have registered to access the MGA Website are currently receiving MGA updates (circulated by postcard) by email and will also have the option to receive their monthly mailings by email rather than post (*if requested*).

There are three ways to register. Simply contact the office by email (mga1@globalnet.co.uk), fax (01189 761451) or 'phone (01189 761276) and provide us with your preferred username and a password. We will then update the site database and confirm details enabling access to the MGA information and the email correspondence service.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Diary Dates

▪ **12th & 13th June**

*Cereals 2002**, Grange Farm, North Rauceby, Sleaford, Lincs

▪ **14th - 18th July**

BGS Summer Meeting, North Wales please contact BGS (01189 318189)

▪ **18th & 19th September**

Dairy Event, NAC, Warwickshire

▪ **2nd October**

Bath & West Dairy Show, Somerset

▪ **23rd October**

MGA/BGS Mini-Conference, Sussex

*** MGA at Cereals 2002**

MGA are attending the Cereals Event in Lincolnshire to promote MGA Grain Maize work.

Final diary from David Christensen...

The first harvesting operation of the year at Kingston Hill is now behind us as we have just finished first cut silage. I decided to cut despite a very uncertain forecast and in the end the gamble paid off because although the clouds and rain thundered all around us, it stayed dry.

The crops on the lighter land were very high yielding and consequently didn't wilt particularly well despite being tedded out after mowing because of all the overcast weather. The heavier land crops were much lighter in yield but wilted well so we have a full pit of what I hope will be some excellent quality silage to reduce our purchased protein bill next winter.

What a relief to have that behind us and now I can look forward to a day throwing tyres about - what a pleasure that will be! Maize is coming along well now, as are the weeds, so when the wind drops this week I must get some spraying done if we are to avoid yield reduction.

What a glorious time of year this is with all the countryside looking at its best. We have plenty of grass around the place (which makes a pleasant change) and the challenge will be to utilise it effectively if it goes on growing at the current rate.

The cows and heifers are all out grazing so workload is significantly reduced and the stock look in really good shape. We are now planning our summer program of improvement work to keep us occupied over the coming months,

the main task being installing cubicles in what was a loose housing shed.

After an independent National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme inspection last week, carried out for Milklink, we have a few minor jobs to do but otherwise we passed well which was a relief.

A family wedding being held on the farm at the end of August also means a significant clean up operation is required which will take up some time. So plenty to do.

This will be my last update from Kingston Hill Farm, as at last weeks AGM I handed over the chairmanship of MGA to Charles Moore. It has been a privilege and pleasure to be in the chair for the last 12 months and I would like to thank members for their support.

A particular vote of thanks must go to members of the MGA Council who put in so much of their own time and also to Angus Golightly for his organisational skills. Finally, last but certainly not least, my thanks to Noelle for acting as the lynch pin of the association.

All that remains for me to say is to wish you all well with your farming and lets hope that the rough ride that we have had over recent years abates and that once again we can enjoy our farming without quite so much financial pressure.

With my best wishes,

David Christensen