

The Surrey County Agricultural Society

Results of Environmental Farm Competition 2005

Thursday, 7th July 2005

Judge: **Debbie Miller, Hants FWAG**

Steward: **Sonia Ashworth**

P C Stovold & Son, Lydling Farm, Shackleford, Godalming, Surrey (Angus Stovold)

Judges comments: Lydling Farm is predominantly a livestock farm. Over the past 10-15 years Angus has undertaken a wide range of conservation activities on the farm – some funded under CSS. There are a wide range of habitats on the farm including ancient woodland, ponds, a stream, hedgerows, species rich wet meadow, grass margins and set-aside.

Much of the hedgerow restoration work is now completed under CSS. However, Angus continues to maintain his hedgerows sensitively without grant funding, through rotational cutting and coppicing. Two ponds have also been created on the farm – before the CSS agreement started, which provides an important additional source of water for wildlife on the farm.

One of the most impressive things about Lydling Farm is its commitment to sustainable farming. Angus works with nature – he recognises that the soil is poor and therefore allows for this when producing his grass and cattle. No artificial fertiliser has been used this year on the grassland and topping rather than spraying is used to control weeds. Some thistles in places will be left (i.e. patches on set-aside) to provide a wintering seed source for birds. The once rye grass leys have now become more diverse with a good mixture of old meadow grasses and flowers. This provides good insect habitat and subsequent feeding grounds for swallows. No Ivermectins are used when the cattle are outside, to ensure that dung beetles can continue to feed safely.

Those areas on the farm that are particularly special (i.e. species rich wet meadows) are being managed sensitively – with periodic, extensive grazing and no inputs occurring. A large area of wet pasture has been left out of CSS – however, this area is still being managed in the same extensive manner – which again demonstrates Angus' commitment to conservation.

The pig enterprise on the higher land is also managed carefully to address resource protection issues. The pigs are rotated with maize and peas, with strategically placed ley grass and margins to ensure that no run-off occurs.

Angus' sustainable approach to farming is clearly having conservation benefits – the bird life was very evident during our visit with 1000's of starling noted, plus linnet, greenfinch, buzzard, chaffinch and little owl all noted.

Angus should be congratulated on his ongoing enthusiasm and commitment for conservation on his farm.