



## God's blessings

*An old farmer from Talybont used to tell him that no matter what the weather there would always be a harvest. John Howells, a farmer from Aberystwyth, gives thanks for the turning of the year*

Of course in one way harvest is much easier these days. As a child I remember we grew oats and barley as well as hay. The edges of the fields would be cut with a scythe to enable the tractor to come in. In those days the tractor was only beginning to replace the horse. As harvest-time was so stressful there would be special prayer meetings held to pray for favourable weather.

That is why the harvest thanksgiving services were so important. In those days it was 'better to have a poor harvest on a Monday than to break the Sabbath in order to have a better harvest'. The change from hay to silage means that farmers are not as dependent on the weather. Huge machines can harvest as much as 100 acres a day. Now so much is so different and we live in a secular society where God does not have His proper place any longer.

Although I was raised on a dairy farm in Carmarthenshire my parents were very keen for me to have a better life than farming. After graduating in American Studies in UCW Aberystwyth I realised that my heart was still in the land. I worked on a dairy and sheep farm in Talybont where I spent four years working with the Maesnewydd family. I learned a lot more than just farming from Jim and Dewi Edwards who ran the mountain farm.

By then my parents had sold the home farm. Therefore, after many interviews, I had the opportunity to take on a rented farm from the Council. There, in Llanrhystud, my wife and I milked, lambed and raised six children. Although I have passed the 'age of promise' I still milk the cows each day and there is a peacefulness which comes from working on the land and with animals.

As I look at the beauty of His creation I am thankful every day for God's blessings. Yes, there are problems and over the last few years we have had to deal with Brucellosis, TB, Milk Quotas, Mad Cow Disease, Foot and Mouth and now Coronavirus.

It's difficult - as we give of our best - to read about farmers who mistreat their stock and who are responsible for climate changes. I would like to invite some of the critics to spend some time on a farm and to be out all night lambing or till late at night trying to harvest the hay/silage before the weather turns! Also, although the work was more difficult physically years ago harvest time was a sociable period with neighbours helping each other. Today, a farmer's life can be a lonely one.

As I write, the second silage cut has been brought in safely and we are looking forward to a third as fodder for the animals through the winter. Although I am aware that there are so many problems in the world - drought, crop failure and, as a result, children starving - those are often problems which are a result of man's effect on the natural balance of the world.

Personally, I am very conscious of the blessing God has given me. As I think back to Jim Morgan, the wise old farmer from Talybont, he was also fond of quoting "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33) but he never finished the verse. I am happy that I can bear witness to the second half "But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world". Amen!

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