

# Diss Monitor Farm Meeting Report

## Meeting 1 – Monitor Farm Launch

25<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Rookery Farm, Diss

For more information, visit: [ahdb.org.uk/Diss](http://ahdb.org.uk/Diss)



Richard Ling  
Diss Monitor Farmer

## Diss Monitor Farm Introduction

Richard's ambition is to carry on building a resilient and profitable farming business, with a good work-life balance for all. Through being a monitor farmer, Richard is keen to learn with others and better understand the industry and the challenges facing it. With a keen interest in how to manage his variation in soil types, employ precision farming to best effect and manage manure and nutrient inputs, the three year programme will follow these themes.

### Farm Background

Rookery Farm	
<b>Total farm hectarage</b>	400ha
<b>Arable area</b>	380ha, comprising of owned and contract farmed land
<b>Cropping</b>	Current rotation: OSR/W.Wheat/W.Wheat or W.Barley/S.Barley. Current cropping: W.Osr 63 ha / 1 <sup>st</sup> W.wheat 91 ha / 2 <sup>nd</sup> W.wheat 52 Ha / W. barley 47 Ha / S.barley 107 Ha / Trial crop S. Triticale 20 Ha.
<b>Predominant soil type</b>	The soil types across the farm are very varied, with in-field and between field variation, from sandy loams to heavy clay loams.
<b>Labour</b>	One full time member of staff, plus casual labour as required.
<b>Machinery</b>	The farm typically runs good quality used machinery and has 360 hp Cat Yr 2009, 300 hp J.Deere Yr 2011, 240 hp Fendt 724 Yr 2012, 175 hp Fendt 716 Yr 2004.  <b>Primary tillage:</b> Rlm Yr 2015( low disturbance subsoiler toolbar)plus carrier Yr 2010, Lemken 7 furrow onland-in furrow plough Yr 2014. Drilling, Vaderstad 6mtr Rda Yr 2012, Weaving 4.8 mtr Gd Yr 2016. Rolling, Dalbo 12 mtr 2013.

	<p><b>Application:</b> Sands Horizon 5500ltr 36 mtr sprayer Yr 2018, Amazone weigh cell Fert spreader 24-48 mtr Yr 2008.</p> <p><b>Harvesting:</b> 10.5 mtr New Holland combine. Telehandler Jcb 541-70 Yr 2019</p>
<b>Cultivation policy</b>	The cultivations are mainly min-till, but every field is evaluated in every season and what is done is what is required for the field and weather at the time, whether that be plough or direct drill or something in the middle! The deciding factor is always the soil health.
<b>Grain storage</b>	The farm has all flat, concrete floor sheds with pedestals. Every crop goes over a weighbridge before going into store. At Rookery farm we have 3700 tons storage made up of two sheds: 1400 ton store, 2300 tons. A further 900 ton storage off farm includes three flat floor sheds 450 ton/300 ton and a 150 tons.
<b>Non-arable enterprises</b>	Rookery Farm also has a beef finishing unit for Morrisons supermarket, aiming to finish 180 head of British Blues each year on a KISS system. The farm also has let business units, a self storage business and a couple of house/cottage rents.

## Diss Monitor Farm Steering Group

Richard is joined by the following local farmers, agronomist and advisors as Steering Group members, who will help to guide the programme over the three years. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to get in touch with the Steering Group members:



Tom Rash



James Porter



Marion Self



Stuart Alexander

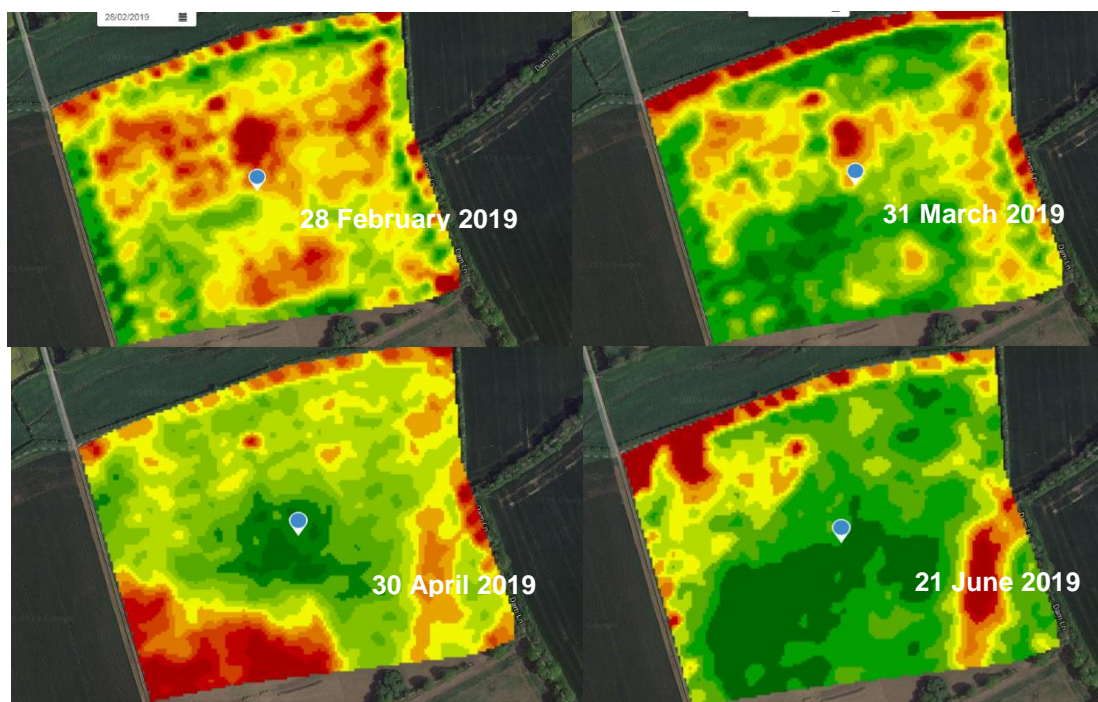
## Launch Farm Walk

The farm tour at the Monitor Farm launch included a tour of the cropping, differing soil types between arable and grass land, managing black-grass, cultivations and the use of stale seedbeds, machinery purchases and diversification.

A key focus for Richard over the Monitor Farm programme is headland management and how best to minimise compaction and increase yield. The group took a look at field 'Rookery 36', were provided with the season's NDVI images (see below) and asked to predict the estimated yield of this crop. In

In addition, the group were asked to estimate the difference in yield between the highest and lowest yielding parts of the field. The winners will be announced at the first winter meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November!

## NDVI Images of Rookery 36



## SWOT Analysis

The group conducted a SWOT analysis of Richard's farm business at the launch meeting, outlined below:

ROOKERY FARM	
<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diversification</li> <li>▪ Infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Family business</li> <li>▪ Aware of cost of production</li> <li>▪ Gary</li> <li>▪ <u>Morrisons</u> contract</li> <li>▪ Machinery</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve rotation</li> <li>▪ Decrease horsepower</li> <li>▪ Over-capitalised</li> <li>▪ Scale</li> <li>▪ Security</li> <li>▪ Fixed costs/ha</li> <li>▪ Cost of family casual labour</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More diversification</li> <li>• Grass in rotation – black-grass control/cattle</li> <li>• Countryside Stewardship agreement</li> <li>• CTF for manure</li> <li>• Machinery fleet</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rotation</li> <li>▪ Casual labour</li> <li>▪ Loss of actives</li> <li>▪ Tax</li> <li>▪ Succession</li> <li>▪ Brexit and BPS</li> <li>▪ Loss of <u>Morrisons</u> contract</li> <li>▪ Vegans!</li> <li>▪ Weather/climate</li> </ul>

## Monitor Farm Meetings Focus

The group also looked at the areas that the Monitor Farm programme should focus on over the next three years, based on the challenges for arable farms ahead. The main results of this discussion are below:

### Top 10 challenges facing arable farms over the next three years:

- Loss of actives – glyphosate
- Weather
- **Knowing your cost of production**
- Diminishing soils
- Data – next step?
- Skilled labour/training – source?
- Government policy
- Loss of BPS
- **Urban pressure**
- Water
- Improving organic matter
- Rising input costs
- Lifestyle
- Labour and machinery costs
- Precision farming
- **Marketing**
- Public perception
- Rotation
- Sustainable business

## Further Information

### Winter Meeting Dates 2019 to 2020

All meetings will take place from: 13:00 – 16:15 at Wortham Village Hall, Willow Corner, Wortham, Suffolk, IP22 1PS

- Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019 – Headland management
- Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 – Manure management
- Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 – Machinery and labour costings
- Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – Beneficials and IPM

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