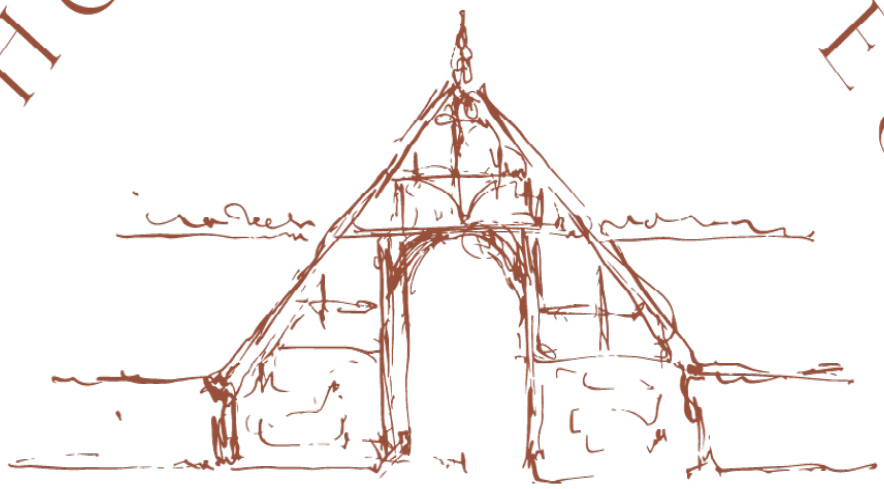
THE CHOLDERTON ESTATE



EST 1885

Organic Oats

The Annual Cycle at Cholderton Estate

Proudly Working with

Morning FOODS

Henry Edmunds & Adam Lowe, The Estate Office, Cholderton, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 0DR
www.cholderton--estate.co.uk

Sep 2023

THE CHOLDERTON ESTATE

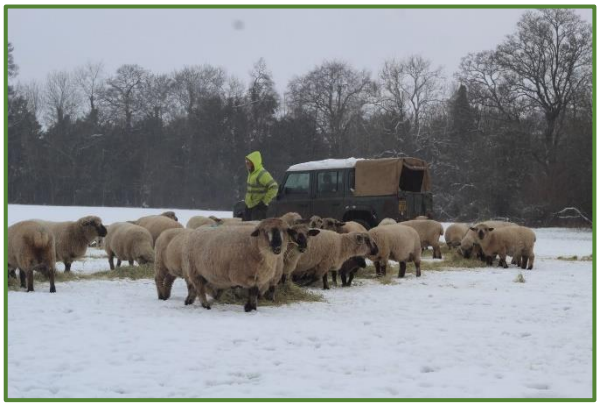
Our 1,000 hectare farm on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border has been certified organic for nearly 50 years. The result is an estate that is both commercial and sustainable, supporting an exceptional wealth and diversity of wildlife.

Aside from arable and re-wilded areas, the farm runs around 500 head of sheep and 600 cattle that graze extensively managed herbal ley pastures across our ancient chalk downland landscape.

THE HAMPSHIRE DOWN SHEEP FLOCK

"The estate's soil fertlity generators"

Sheep grazing plays an essential part in generating the fertility needed for oat crops in our light soils.

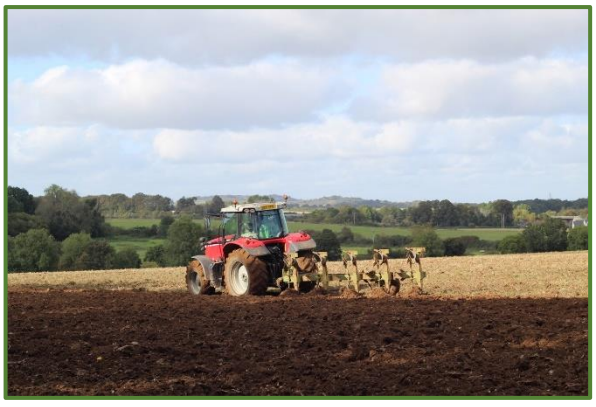


Cholderton's "Hampies"

Left: The oldest flock in the world, ready for lambing.
Right: Winter Feeding – The flock is given a daily boost of Cholderton oats, the very same oats they help to generate each year.

STEP 1. GROUND PREPERATION

It's early September and the first task is to turn over the residues of the previous crop, breaking composition and creating an even structure for the oat crop



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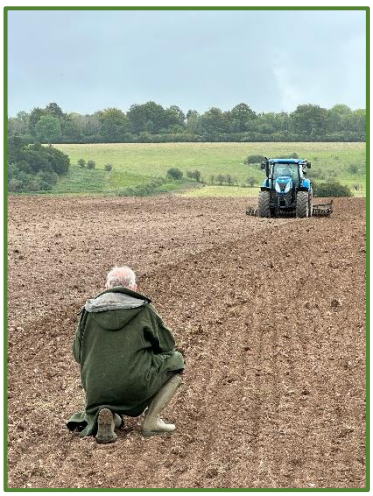
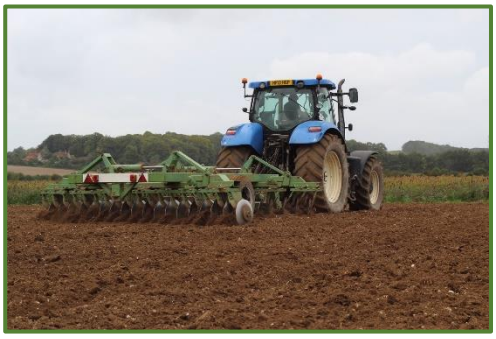
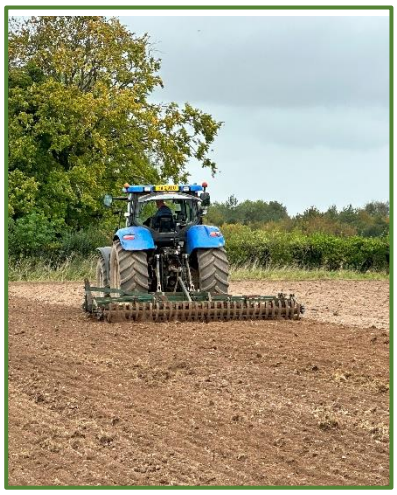
STEP 2. DISKING & TILLING

Mid September disking breaks up clods of surface crusts and improves soil granulation and surface uniformity. The field will rely on the fertility generated by the previous 5 year crop of Lucerne.



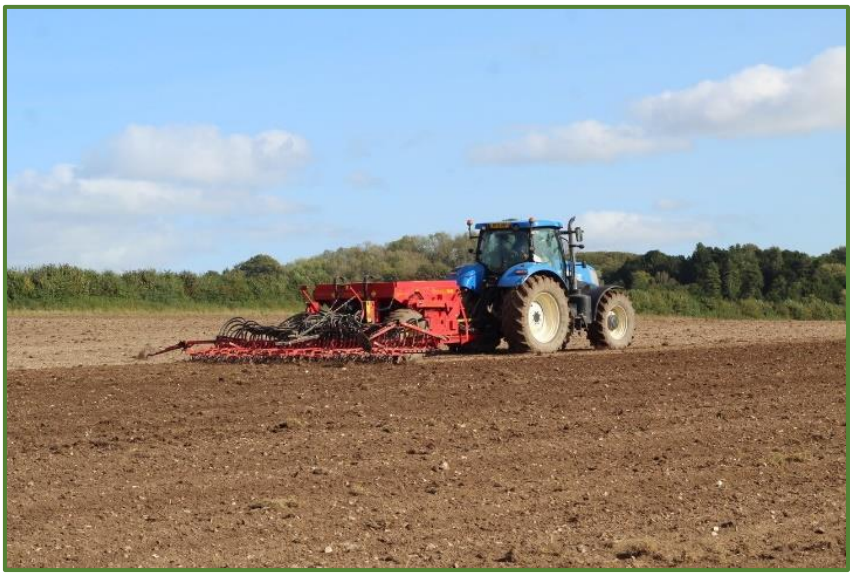


Tilling breaks up the root mat of the previous 6 year leguminous sword. It aerates the soil to let moisture and air permeate, allowing our oat seeds to germinate and generate root growth



STEP 3. SEED DRILLING

It's now late September. The land has been made ready and its time to sow the oats. Our organically home grown oat seed is sown at the optimum seeding rate and depth, ensuring that the seeds are covered by soil. This saves them from being eaten by birds and animals, or being dried up due to exposure to the sun. Our drill ensures seeds are distributed in rows; this allows young oat plants to get sufficient sunlight, nutrients, and water from the soil.



LEFT: Drilling the new crop after a long standing herbal ley.

The previous work ploughing, disking and tilling the land has resulted in a beautiful crumbly tilth in which the home grown oat seed can be sown.

BELOW: Our Home grown organic oat seed

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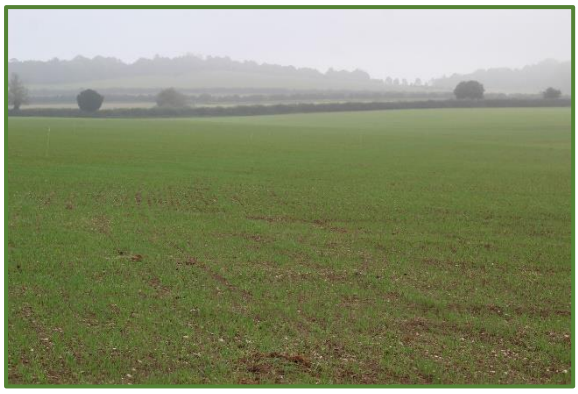
STEP 4. THE GERMINATING CROP

In early October, the changeable weather helps the oat seed germinate and sees the emergence of the young crop. Oats thrive under cool, moist conditions on well-drained soil.



ABOVE: A view over the landscape with the autumn mists enshrouding the new crop of organic oats

STEP 5. SPRING WEEDS

Spring arrives and in March, the emergence of weeds dominate the soil. This new and vigorous growth appears to be overpowering the young oat plants. However, once these low growing weeds have flowered, they die back, allowing the oat plants to come through. In fact, only weeks later, there is no sign of the weeds at all as the oats dominate once again. Allowing this natural cycle to unfold not only mitigates any need for toxic agri-chemicals to control weeds, but it also has huge benefits for our bees. Red Dead Nettle provides an essential early source of nectar for emerging Bumblebees. Solitary Bees rely on Germander Speedwell for their first feed of the season and Fumitory helps kick start our Honey Bees into action after a long winter in the hive.

ABOVE: Bumblebee nectaring on Red Dead Nettle

ABOVE: New weed growth overpowers the new oat crop – or so it appears.

RIGHT: Common Fumitory in bloom, the seeds of which are a favourite food for finches and buntings.

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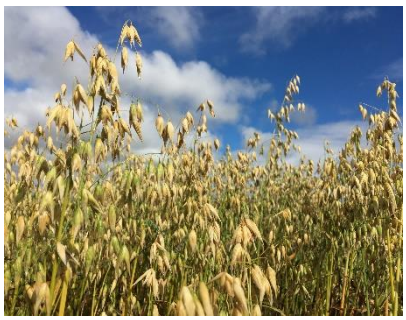
STEP 6. THE MATURE CROP

Mid summer arrives and the oat crop is dense and tall. Early summer is a critical period for oat farmers. The crop needs lots of light, warmth and water to fill the grains, so periods of both warm sunshine and rain are ideal.
By this time the oats are bright green and can be up to 4ft tall!

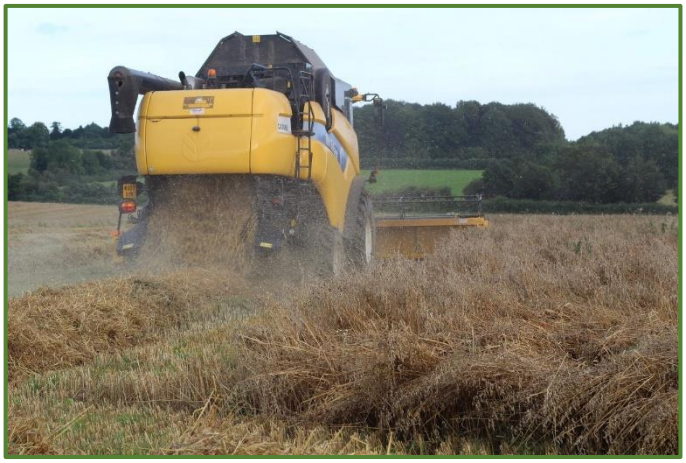




ABOVE: Field poppies dotted through the maturing oat crop, another nectar producer for our pollinators.
Also, the ripening seed heads of the oat plants

STEP 7. HARVEST

As the end of summer approaches, the condition of the oats across many fields is monitored daily. When estate owner Henry Edmunds and his son, Rory, give the signal, the team at Cholderton rallies for the estate's key annual event; harvest. The combine is fired up and the team work tirelessly well into the evening; tractors racing from field to farm yard, their trailers laden with freshly harvested oats.




Combine Harvester in Action

TOP LEFT: A really thick crop enabled by the previous long standing pasture – grazed by the estate's sheep and cattle

BOTTOM LEFT: The crop is exceptionally clean due to the use of pasture in the estate's rotational cycle.

STEP 8. THE FINAL TOUCHES

The grain is then conditioned by blowing warm air through it using a grain dryer.

The oats are continually monitored and with both temperature and moisture readings taken daily.

Once the moisture level is 16% or less, the grain is ready for expert oat millers, Morning Foods.

The grain is then run into round simplex bins at the estate's Home Farm Yard. From here, the crop is loaded into artic lorries to be transported to Morning Foods where it will become part of their award winning organic oat products.

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