

Changes to the countryside  
Present day contrasted with fifty years ago

There is a huge contrast between the type of farming we have in Britain today and the farming we had fifty years ago. Machines, modern equipment, large commercial farms and chemicals did not exist in Britain fifty years back. Although all these modern day inventions have helped to make farming a lot easier and there is more environmental awareness, not all changes have been for the better.

Forty years ago England was only producing  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the food that we consumed, all the rest of the food was imported mainly by ships! But in world war two, the German navy bombed many ships that were importing our food, or the food did not reach us for whatever reason. It was only then that the government started to pay farmers more money to grow more crops, and to get their buildings and farms up to scratch. As farmers got paid more money and the government began to take farming much more seriously, encouraged the production and development of machinery and fertilizers. The types of machines made, were used for ploughing, harvesting and fertilising the crops. This made a farmer's job and life a lot easier.

Before the machinery was invented, some farms had about 50 people working on one farm at a time, and everything that needed to be done was done by hand or with the help

of animals. .e.g. ploughing with shire horses. But now even large farms have only around seven labourers!

Unfortunately, all this advancement has paid a heavy price on our environment. All the machinery and fertilisers are worked by petrol and chemicals, which are NOT environmentally friendly. They pollute the environment and kill off the local wildlife. Pollution rises and evaporates into the air, so when the rain falls, the rain gets polluted by the pollution in the air. This means that the rivers and streams can become polluted, which kills off fish and wildlife which drink and live in the water.

Fifty years ago, fields were very small, but there were a lot of them. Farmers did not need big fields as everything they did was done by hand, but because big machinery is a very big part of modern farming now-a-days, bigger fields are a lot easier to manage. The machinery has been made so big that the small fields are not suitable for the vehicles. The machines find it difficult to turn around in such a small, combined space; so a modern day farmers conclusion to this, is knock down plants, hedgerows or anything possible that gets in the way of extending the fields. As so many farmers have this problem, more and more hedgerows are being knocked down and extended into bigger fields. Hedgerows attract wild life and birds, without hedgerows the birds and animals would have nowhere to go and would soon become extinct. Modern day agriculture has scared off wildlife and is killing our environment, but who should we blame?

Not only has the environment been effected by modern agriculture, country life has been too. My village, Shoreham in Kent is a good example. Fifty years ago, this village used to be bustling with shops and had its own local policemen, blacksmiths and four pubs. There was a lot of community spirit. Apart from the pubs, all the shops have now closed down and the village seems empty during the day, apart from the odd dog walkers and visitors to the pubs.

Most people who live here work out of the village and many commute on the train to London. There are a few large farms in the area which used to employ many workers in the past, but now the farmers only employ a handful of people due to the modernisation of farming methods.

Although modern agriculture has made the farmer's life easier and helped farmer's produce bigger and better crops: modern agriculture has also caused our environment to change in a negative way. The long term effects of all these chemicals that are used in farming are not really known, who knows what damage they are causing our environment? The destruction of hedgerows to make bigger fields has effected the local wildlife and changing the environment too.

However, on a positive note, modern agriculture has made many good changes. There is a lot more consideration about the effects on our environment and many farmers are going back to traditional methods without using chemicals.

I think that modern agriculture has had a lot to offer if only it is used wisely!