

Grit and determination



Roger Gilbert

It's the end of another year and the end of our second full year dealing with the impact and outcomes from the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Each of us has been challenged by Covid with some having to experience greater suffering and hardships than others. All of us will know family, friends or associates who have had serious health challenges and our collective thoughts

go out to them.

However, the world must move on and other issues are coming back into focus as vaccination programmes bring some relief to our communities. Here, I'm referring to 'Climate Change' which gained worldwide attention with the COP26 meetings taking place in Scotland in early November and which we report on in this issue (see page 44), plus the often-overlooked matter of anti-microbial resistance which is likely to have an increasing impact on human health in the near future. We carry the first of a two-part review of this topic on page 50. The first part looks at how we arrived at this crossroad and our second part in January 2022 will look to future actions we are and/or should be taking.

I was fortunate enough to attend the UK's AIC (Agriculture Industries Confederation) annual conference, held for the second time via an online platform, in mid-November and following the conclusion of COP26.

Whilst there are many challenges our UK farming sector faces - including shortage in readily available labour, shortage of hauliers, mental health concerns and the implications new trade deals being struck following Brexit to name a few - planning an industry-wide response to climate change is yet another significant challenge.

It is clear that our food producing sectors need to be working closer with their respective governments - not just here in the UK but everywhere - to ensure that these critical issues from climate change to mental health are properly addressed.

To give farmers longer-term confidence in their businesses, the Confederation called on the UK government to develop a 25-year

agricultural plan for the industry in the same way it has adopted a 25-year plan for the environment.

While the UK government feels it is talking to the right people in the farming sector, the industry is not so sure. It points to the New Zealand, Australian and Canadian arrangements where governments involve farming directly in its policy and trade agreement discussions.

It is clear that if we are to have joined-up action on addressing some of these issues both here in the UK and in other countries, governments must be prepared to involve those in industry in a more meaningful way.

Saying governments cannot develop a 25-year strategy for agriculture with the industry having a significant input in that planning process is just kicking all the tin cans down the road and denying the unification needed to bring about meaningful and responsible change by committed stakeholders - including those in the further processing of agricultural produce such as flour, rice and feed millers, etc.

On a lighter note, I have received through the mail a first edition of a commemorative book entitled 'With the windmillwrights in fen and marsh' by Douglas Reid from the Mills Archive Trust here in the UK.

The commemorative edition's print run was just 20 copies - one for each year the Mills Archive Trust has been in existence and Milling and Grain is proud to have received the first of the 20 numbered books produced.

'With the windmillwrights in fen and marsh' is the unfinished manuscript of Douglas Reid found among the documents in the Rex Wails Collection, which Milling and Grain supports (along with others) at the Archive. Douglas Reid deals with windmill construction, mostly used as wind pumps for draining land, in the early 20th Century and is insightful for the period prior to steam and the introduction of mechanical energy. We are honoured to be providing support to the Archive so that it can catalogue, store and make available to anyone who asks, historical documents relating to milling from the UK, Europe and elsewhere.

