



styles' stance

by Richard Styles

Does crime pay?

This thought has been whirring through my mind for some time. Recently we were burgled by some nefarious swine in the middle of the night and all our satellite navigation systems off the tractors and combine were stolen.

This loss means that when ploughing behind some sugar beet, we're having to drive tractors manually. When you're used to simply sitting there reading a book while the machine purrs along, it comes as a bit of a shock to have to concentrate and then find I can't drive in a straight line anymore.

In the long and distant past, I may well have prided myself that I once could drive as straight as an arrow. But not anymore as the knack has gone after 15 years of slouching behind the wheel half asleep has taken its toll. In my son's case, it may well have not been there at all as he has never known anything else...

Putting to one side the feeling of impotence and stress of not being able to do anything about being robbed, bar installing a few laser tripwires — something the local police officer advised against for some strange reason — the emotive tensions of a person damaging your machines, making your life worse off and then getting

away completely free is palpable.

It's not just the financial loss that is irksome, as no doubt my insurance premium will rise next year, but the time spent sorting it all out. I spent an afternoon last week being interviewed by the police. Originally, I had thought it was for a statement but, apparently, it was to assess my suitability as a witness for a court appearance. Unfortunately, I scored ten out of ten so if the culprits are caught by the police and the CPS (Crime Prosecution Service) do go ahead and prosecute them, it means another day of my life being questioned by a barrister if it goes to trial.

It's also the loss of data — all the wonderful field lines that were set up so the sprayer boom just kisses the infield electric poles. This has all gone as a new update occurred late last year and, guess what? Our backup memory stick is incompatible with the new software...

A second-hand cash safe has now been purchased — there are lots of these about as the high street banks are closing at such a rapid rate. Five thousand branches in the last seven years alone according to the papers and the safes are sold off cheap to keep up with the closures. Suffice to say my nearest bank is now 18 miles away.

A steel security door has been ordered for the building and tough steel bars on the window are on the cards. This is costing some £2500 in total. I did think I might mitigate this expense by cutting back on the current police precept I pay through my council tax but that would

be illegal. No irony there then.

I see in the farming press that two individuals, have recently been jailed for an average of 100 months in total. The court also ordered the deprivation of one of their cars, which I might wager probably isn't worth much.

They stole some £380K (replacement cost) of equipment so, let us make a few assumptions here. If they received half of the stolen amount for the kit that's £190K. Both reprobates serve 50 months in prison and they are on remand for six months, but they get the 50% parole off their sentence after serving their remand portion, as advised by the Justice Department. Incidentally, I met a person from the said department once on a train from London and apparently, we are all victims — of society. That means they will serve 22 months each in prison after sentencing. Divide £190K by two meaning £95K each, divide that by 22 months and we arrive at £4318 a

Richard Styles is a third-generation farmer in central Suffolk who, dispute his best efforts, is still managing to farm and says he loves his job: tilling land and growing crops. His land is Hanslope Clay and will produce some eye watering yields — though mostly for his neighbours, as he's never reached the apex of an average 13t/ha of wheat, yet. But perhaps he should visit the pub more often...

month. That's a sum not to be sneezed at. Even a fully qualified nurse wouldn't earn that. Not only that, it is more than some farmers earn in a year.

So, in answer to my original rhetorical question, does crime pay? Why, yes it does and quite handsomely. I wonder if I should turn to crime then?



Rural crime is an increasing problem that's expensive emotionally and timewise, as well as the financial loss.

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