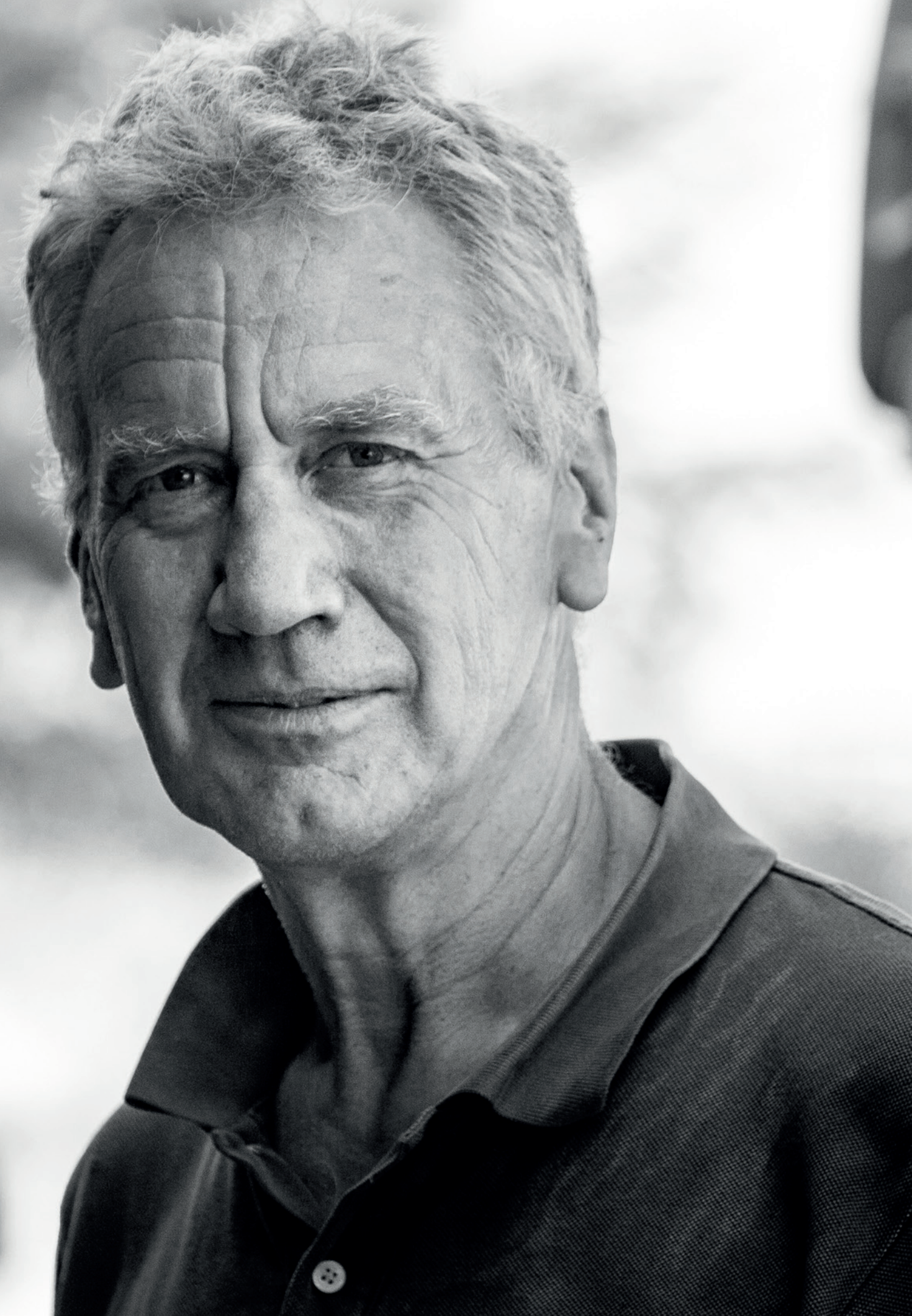


There's no stopping it

“With the differing crop conditions over the last two seasons we can now confidently say the 8900 will do at least 20% more than the old combine, if not more.”

Richard Ledger, Kent, August 2020, LEXION 8900.





This season is the second harvest for Little Mongeham Farms' LEXION 8900 which has the task of single-handedly knocking down some 1,425ha (3,520 acres) of combinable crops.

A pre-production model last year, it took over from a 780TT and immediately impressed the team at the Kent-based operation with its appetite.

"Initially we were sceptical about how much more capacity the 8900 would have but from the outset it was clear it was something else," says Richard Ledger.

"With the differing crop conditions over the last two seasons we can now confidently say it'll do at least 20% more than the old combine, if not more.

"But that's not the most impressive part. What's really striking is the fuel use. It'll cut all that extra tonnage while using significantly less diesel.

"While the old combine would go for a maximum of 11 hours between fill-ups, the new machine will stretch to 14 hours. Logistically that can make a big difference, avoiding a stop at a time when you could still be combining."

This difference in both output and fuel use is felt to be mainly down to the improved flow of crop through the LEXION 8900.

"It's a whole lot smoother and quieter than our 780," says operator Nigel Richardson.

"Sitting in the seat you can feel that the combination of the bigger diameter drums and concaves, the new engine, the new unloading auger and the rubber-belted intake elevator all work to put less stress and strain on the machine which has got to be better for diesel consumption."

CEMOS AUTOMATIC

There aren't many operators with more experience of flagship LEXION than Nigel, who has been at the helm of Little Mongeham's combines for some 35 years. Two seasons in with the new range-topper, he believes he's still got plenty to learn.

"I've been lucky to see the evolution of CLAAS' CEMOS auto settings system over time and this new version is a real step forward.

"Being more familiar with the combine in this second season I've experimented a bit more, tweaking settings and fine-tuning the system to get the best from it. Each time I delve deeper into CEMOS I find something else that either ups output, improves the sample or helps to kerb any losses."



Harvest worker Matt Laslett.



Combine operator Nigel Richardson.

GRAIN QUALITY CAMERA

Nigel continues, "Having the camera constantly monitoring sample quality is what really makes the difference with CEMOS – I can just leave it to do its own thing safe in the knowledge we won't see any extra rubbish in the tank. In fact I never touch the sieve or fan settings, the only thing I tend to tweak is rotor or drum speed and, even then, more often than not I find that I'm better just sticking with what CEMOS has selected."

"The sample itself is so clean that I nearly always have CEMOS set to maximum throughput. Even then there's hardly a sign of any chaff or straw in the tank."

QUANTIMETER

"Yield monitoring is so much more accurate than before. We can now trust that what the combine says it has cut is pretty much exactly what's in the heap."

"Last year we cut 11,640 tonnes according to the 8900 and the total across the weighbridge was pretty close to that – that level of accuracy is pretty impressive."

MAINTENANCE

"The 8900 is a much cleaner machine than anything we've ever had before. Along with the horizontal radiator package, there are so many fewer places for dust to hang up, especially on the pulleys."

"As a result I'm only having to clean it down once a week with our big road-towable compressor. Each morning I just whip round with the on-board air-line and blow off the worst of it."

WHY CLAAS?

"We're probably a bit over-capacity with the 8900 on our acreage but it gives us the peace of mind that we can comfortably cover all our ground with just one machine rather than two - that's a huge efficiency gain," explains Richard Ledger.

"I believe CLAAS has the edge when it comes to output from these biggest LEXION and the technology they use. But ultimately it all comes down to back-up."

"We know that in our area our CLAAS dealer will look after us better than any other brand if we have anything go wrong."

FARM FACTS

- FARM** Little Mongeham Farms near Deal, Kent
- FARMED AREA** 1,425ha (3,520, acres)
- CROP** Winter wheat 774ha (1,912 acres), OSR 310ha (765 acres), spring barley 110ha (272 acres), winter beans 46ha (114 acres), spring beans 48ha (118 acres), forage maize 100ha (247 acres)
- STAFF** Richard and James Ledger plus Nigel Richardson and Jim Harmer