



“Floats over the ground”

# Martyn Hall

Ramsbury Estate, Marlborough, AXION 960 TT

## AXION IN ACTION

We recently joined Duncan Lee, farm manager of Ramsbury Estate near Marlborough, who has been evaluating a pre-production example of the CLAAS AXION 960 TERRA TRAC.

"We grow approximately 2700ha of combinable crops," reveals Duncan. "This estate is a CLAAS stronghold and we work very closely both with our local dealer and CLAAS UK. The back-up we get is fantastic and we've always found CLAAS kit to be very reliable. The only equipment we own outright are our two LEXION 780 combines and our primary cultivation and drilling tractors. All the other tractors and telehandlers on the estate are here on long-term, two-year hire contracts from CLAAS," he adds.

In recent years, the Ramsbury Estate has relied on a twin-track Challenger MT 875E for primary cultivation work. Drilling duties with the estate's 8m Vaderstad Rapid 800S seed drill have been handled by a CLAAS XERION 3800 (380hp), which was also used for fertilising until being sold recently.

"We previously used the Challenger on the drill but we found using a large twin-track tractor scuffed like mad on

the headlands. The XERION actually handled the drill very well but the opportunity to evaluate the new AXION 960 TERRA TRAC has already revealed that the half-track has a lighter footprint than the XERION and similar pulling power to the Challenger without the tracks scuffing on the headlands."

## BEHIND THE WHEEL

The man responsible for driving the AXION half-track is the Ramsbury Estate's assistant farm manager Martyn Hall. A seasoned drill man with years of experience on both tracklayers and wheeled machines, Martyn is complimentary about the new TERRA TRAC. "I am very impressed with how well it puts the power down," he says. "We are not working in ideal conditions. You can see by the amount of mud on the drill that we're pulling around a considerable amount of additional weight yet the TERRA TRAC has no problem achieving a target speed of 12.5kph.

"With a wheeled tractor the transmission would be waiting for the wheels to catch up in order to find traction. Even in these conditions, with the half-track it's the transmission that has to adjust itself to cope with

the grip of the tracks. Yes, you can see some track slip by the way in which the tread pattern is distorted, but there's no significant footprint left behind and I have the wheel mark eradicators set so they're barely tickling the surface.

"I am also impressed by the ride comfort," adds Martyn. "The independent track suspension provides a very smooth ride and the tractor seems to almost float over the ground.

"You can feel the braking effect when turning, but in damp conditions like this you still get a little bit of mud flinging from the front wheels during sharp turns," explains Martyn. "Having said that, the turning circle is surprisingly good for a tracklayer and you certainly don't get any of the scuffing you do with a conventional twin-track machine."

According to Martyn, during its first 100 hours on the estate so far the AXION 960 TERRA TRAC's fuel consumption has compared very favourably with the slightly less powerful XERION 3800. According to his figures, the AXION TERRA TRAC is burning around 54 litres an hour on the seed drill, while the XERION 3800 previously used around 55.5 litres an hour.

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## ONGOING ASSESSMENT

"Much of the land we farm is full of flint, which is notoriously hard on tyres and tracks," states Martyn Hall. "The shorter overall track length of the TERRA TRAC units (in comparison to the Challenger) could potentially increase the amount of wear and reduce the service life of the tracks. With previous experience of using rubber tracks in this environment we will

be monitoring this very closely.

"The new CLAAS AXION 960 TERRA TRAC is potentially the best tractor we've seen for some time from the German manufacturer. Combining arguably the most capable tractor the company produces with its well-proven TERRA TRAC system might have produced a concept a couple of years ago, yet from what we've seen so far

CLAAS appears to have done a really thorough job with the development of this tractor."

Introduced as a concept tractor at AgriTechnica 2017, the CLAAS AXION 900 TERRA TRAC has since been subjected to 35,000 hours of testing and is now in full production.

