Tim Morris, Gloucestershire

# A combine for life!


Bridget, Tim and Will Morris

## If you're planning on keeping a combine beyond the ten year point you need to have faith that it'll remain reliable and retain its value.

For Gloucestershire-based GW Morris and Son that's certainly the case. Farming just over 400 ha, the business ran a LEXION 520 for 14 seasons before it was changed for a 5500TT in 2021.

"Although it was a 2007 machine, the 520 had had no major issues. It had been super-reliable but I felt that we were beginning to push our luck," says Tim Morris.

"We started to look at our options and had a 660 on demo in 2019. It was a very capable combine but, being a six-walker machine, it was too wide for a lot of our lanes.

"The following year we trialled a 5500 on tracks. It was a different beast altogether. It had phenomenal capacity and travelled over the ground so much better than a wheeled machine – important given how wet harvest was that year.

"But the critical thing that kept it going was the belt-fed CONVIO header that it came with. Even in 21% moisture spring wheat it just kept feeding in without fuss. The way the belts present the crop to the threshing gear means there was no graunching, lumping or banging – it just fed in evenly."

Off that back of that performance it was decided the tracked 5500 and CONVIO cutterbar were the way to go.

"Being an ex-demo machine, the 5500 was packed with features we probably wouldn't have chosen including GPS Pilot, returns monitoring, rubber belted intake elevator and of course the draper header.

"Despite all the extras, the deal to swap still looked good value especially when you took the second-hand price of our old 520 into consideration. I'm pretty confident no other make of combine retains its value like a CLAAS."

### HOW HAS THE 5500TT PERFORMED?

"While the 520 would clear between 18-20 tonnes an hour in 4tonne/acre crops of wheat, the new combine is consistently averaging 27-28 tonnes.

"But it's not all about quantity. The 5500 produces a much cleaner sample even in difficult to thresh crops. Having the extra concave wrap and ability to shut flaps means you've got much more control over what ends up in the tank."

## CONVIO HEADER

"You can't over-state the effect that the CONVIO header has on the performance of the combine as a whole. Because it evens out the crop before it enters the machine everything runs so much more smoothly.

"Always drawn in head-first, crops are threshed that much more effectively at the front end of the combine and as a result the sample is that much cleaner.

"And because there's no auger to wrap round, even tricky spring barley keeps feeding in right into the night. We've probably gained an extra two hours cutting every evening."

## FUEL USE

"The amount of diesel the new combine uses is significantly less than before. Our LEXION 520 averaged 2.27 litres per tonne whereas the 5500 ran at 1.71 litres per tonne last harvest.

"That 20-25% reduction is down to a combination of factors – improved crop flow from the belt-fed CONVIO header, bigger drums and concaves and the effect that Dynamic Power has in only fuelling the engine with what's required."

## ENGINE

"Despite only really sipping diesel the engine doesn't lack poke. While the 520 would struggle when chopping straw on our banks, the 5500 just trundles on regardless even when you put the unloading auger into gear. In fact I'll very rarely see engine loading go over 60% whereas previously we'd be running between 80-90%."

## TELEMATICS

"Previously we haven't had enough information to reliably establish a system for variable rate fertiliser. That's all changed with the new telematics system – the yield mapping element is so much more accessible enabling us to move to a better way of managing our inputs.

"The driver league table that runs during harvest seemed like a bit of a gimmick at first but I quickly found it was a good driver to question yourself, changing various settings to try to get the combine to run that little bit better.

"The CEMOS smartphone app. proved really helpful with that often coming up with suggestions for settings changes that I would never have thought of. Often I end up with the combine set up totally differently to how I would have done it previously."

## AUTO SLOPE AND SIEVES

"One feature that we had added to the ex-demo 5500 was Auto Slope compensation. By opening and shutting sieves as well as adjusting the fan speed depending on whether you're travelling up or down hill, it means the combine runs at a consistent speed without losses rising as you start to climb a hill.

"It gives peace of mind knowing that you're getting the most out of the machine all the time and critically it takes another job away, allowing me to concentrate on other things.

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Tim Morris


“As we had on the 520, 3D sieves make a big difference on side slopes but a change to TM6 sieves on the new machine has had a huge impact. Even in the most brittle-strawed crops they don’t block – I barely had to sweep them at all the entire season.”

## TERRA TRAC

“We’re working towards a no-till crop establishment system which means we really need to start looking after our soils – limiting compaction is a big factor in that.

“Even in the dry harvest we had last year the wheel marks were making a notably less deep mark. But the true test was the previous November when we went out to clear some late-drilled linseed. As you’d expect it was wet but the tracks barely sank below the cleats. If we’d been on wheels it would have been a mess and we would undoubtedly have ended up getting stuck.”

## Why CLAAS?

“We’ve tried plenty of other colour machines on demo but LEXION always seem to produce the cleanest sample and achieve the best workrates.

“And, because we tend to keep our combines a good while build quality is a big factor. Having seen how they’re put together in the factory, with each component properly painted before it’s bolted on, I have faith in CLAAS machines’ reliability.

“On top of that we have a really good relationship with CLAAS WESTERN – the service and back-up has been consistently solid over the years.”

CLAAS

## Farm Facts

GW Morris and Son near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

**Farmed area**

414 ha

**Cropping**

Winter wheat 147 ha
Winter beans 70 ha
Oilseed rape 60 ha
Winter barley 40 ha
Spring barley 38 ha - remainder in stewardship schemes and permanent pasture

**Staff**

Tim and Will Morris with Harry, Bridget and one other part-time.

**CLAAS combine history**

| | |
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| 1968 | Matador with 3m (10ft) header |
| 1983 | Dominator 96 with 4m (13ft) header |
| 1986 | Dominator 98 with 4.5m (15ft) header |
| 1990 | Dominator 98 with 4.5m (15ft) header |
| 1996 | Mega 203 with 5.2m (17ft) header |
| 1998 | 430 with 6m (20ft) header |
| 2007 | 520 with 6m (20ft) VARIO header |
| 2021 | 5500TT with 7.7m (25ft) CONVIO header |