

# STEVE YEANDLE

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## BUSINESS FACTS

Steve Yeandle Contracting  
near Crediton, Devon

**WORK UNDERTAKEN**  
Grass, wholecrop and maize silage, baling, umbilical and tanker slurry work + all arable work except spraying

**FARMED AREA**  
485ha (1200acres)

**MACHINERY**  
Combines (LEXION 750 MONTANA & LEXION 570TT)  
Balers (2 x QUADRANT 5300s, QUADRANT 5200 & QUADRANT 3200)  
Rakes (LINER 2900, LINER 3600 & LINER 4800)  
Tedders (VOLTO 1100 & VOLTO 1320)  
Mowers (DISCO 1100, DISCO 9400 & 2 x DISCO 3200)  
Loader (SCORPION 7055VP)  
Foragers (JAGUAR 970 & JAGUAR 990)

In 1983 a young Devon contractor bought his first self-propelled forager – a CLAAS JAGUAR 690.

Having been running the German company's trailed harvesters for a number of years Steve Yeandle knew what the lime-green machines were capable of and could see that moving to a standalone chopper was the only way to sensibly increase output.

"Back in the early '80s our workload was getting a bit out of hand and we were struggling to keep up with demand," he explains. "Maize was becoming a big thing and we needed to be able to do the job properly. Although CLAAS had only just launched its 600-series foragers I took the plunge and bought a brand-spanking 690.

It revolutionised the job for us and made us so much more efficient. Its only weakness was that being two-wheel-drive it could find our Devon hills a bit challenging – it occasionally got a bit hairy!"

- 1980 JAGUAR 40
- 1983 JAGUAR 690
- 1985 JAGUAR 690S
- 1988 JAGUAR 695SL
- 1989 JAGUAR 695SL
- 1992 JAGUAR 695SL
- 1994 JAGUAR 860
- 1996 JAGUAR 860
- 2001 JAGUAR 890
- 2004 JAGUAR 890
- 2007 JAGUAR 890
- 2009 JAGUAR 960
- 2014 JAGUAR 970
- 2018 JAGUAR 980
- 2020 JAGUAR 990
- 2022 JAGUAR 990



Steve's Grandfather (left blue arrow) with Gerald Dennis (right blue arrow), local dealer owner at the time, on their way to the combine factory circa 1960.



While the move to a self-propelled machine initially got Steve back on top of the job, pretty quickly the workload began to overtake the one chopper and it wasn't long before the 690 was joined first by a 690S and then a 695SL.

"It got a bit ridiculous - we had so much work the only thing we could do was throw men and machines at it.

By the early 1990s we were running three 695s side-by-side. In the spring and summer one was kitted out with a set of mowers to knock down grass ahead of the other two. Come autumn it would have a torpedo hitched on and we'd run three gangs all the way through maize."

While the obvious boost came in the form of more horsepower – the 695SL gaining an additional 54hp over the 690's 300hp – it was other more subtle differences that added up to improve the new generation's overall performance.

"The move to V-pattern blades made crop flow much smoother through the machines, it made them so much better able to handle lumpy swaths.

The updated cab felt like a massive improvement – it wasn't just a greenhouse plonked on top. And we then got four-wheel-drive which meant we weren't ever struggling on our steep ground."

## Why a CLAAS 800-series?

At the end of the summer of 1992, under the cover of darkness something altogether different arrived in the Yeandle yard.

“We were fortunate enough to be given the chance to run pre-production versions of the next generation JAGUARS through maize that year. In fact we had two – an 860 and 880 – which cleared over 1600 acres that autumn. They were a real step on. Of course the wider belly and more horsepower had a big effect but things like access to the corn cracker made a big difference when changing crops.

The Vista cab was the crowning glory. You had so much more space - a big bonus, especially for the larger of the species! There was even a passenger seat for entertaining...”

Having had that prototype experience, it didn't take much persuasion to get Mr Yeandle to purchase one of the new machines and by the mid-1990s he was running two 860s.

“The extra output we got from the 800s was phenomenal and meant we could go down from three to two machines, despite the fact that we were chopping yet more acres by that point. Greater comfort for the drivers meant we could push on and do longer hours without feeling so tired by the end of the day.”

He was also one of the first people to have one of CLAAS's now legendary RU maize headers.

**“Initially we started out with a six-row RU450 but we quickly stepped up to an eight-row version – it created a massive increase in output. “**

That was really important because at that time we were starting to see our harvest window for maize narrow dramatically. Whether it was down to a move towards earlier maturing varieties or the beginning of a change in weather patterns, in the space of a decade we went from a five to six week maize harvest to two to three weeks today. And that's what's really driven our never-ending chase for output.”



## Why a CLAAS 900 Series?

Having had a succession of 860s and later 890s, by the time CLAAS launched its new 900-series JAGUARS in 2008, Mr Yeandle was ready to step up again.

“We took delivery of a 960 for the 2009 season and suddenly realised we had promoted ourselves into another league. The bigger chassis meant it could accommodate bigger chopping gear and of course there was extra horsepower to help the job along. New V-Max cylinders improved crop flow and chop quality.

But once again it was the less obvious things that really made the difference. With swing-back panels, access to the corn cracker and accelerator was improved - making changeovers even easier. Daily, weekly and monthly servicing became even more straightforward and the swing-out feed rollers meant access to the blades and shear-bar was that much better. It was all time and labour saving - if there's one reason to buy a 900-series it's that.”

Today the business runs two – a 2014-plate JAGUAR 970 and a one-year-old 990. While the latter deals with the lion's share of the grass work with the older machine being put to work at peak times, once maize harvest kicks off, the pair go out in different directions to clear as many acres as possible and as quickly as possible.

“Fitted out with 10 and 12- row headers and with plenty of horse-power to throw at the job we can comfortably cover the ground in the ever-shortening harvest window.

It's always too wet or too dry, too hot or too cold so we know we're covered whatever the season throws at us. We've got a huge amount of output but we really do use it.”

As regards the latest generation of JAGUAR's, there are certain key features that Mr Yeandle believes contribute to the 990's unprecedented output and operator friendliness.

“With its ability to match feed-roller speeds and how quickly you're travelling up the row, the variable speed header drive is brilliant in keeping an even loading on the drum and maintaining consistent chop-lengths.

The grass pick-up's new pendulum mounting means contour following is so much better than before. You just preset the pressure you want on the ground and it follows the terrain perfectly.

High capacity hydraulics and the beefed up spout swivel with its own proper brake make it a much more robust machine than before that should last the test of time.”



## Under Pressure

“Our last four machines have been fitted with central tyre inflation so we can vary pressures between the road and the field,” explains Mr Yeandle. “On our steep Devon ground the larger footprint it generates has a big impact on the choppers' hill-climbing ability. It's also a much smoother ride on rough ground.

More important than any of that is the reduced damage we're doing to our customers' ground. We run all our trailers on big floatation tyres and a number of our tractors have tyre inflation systems on them. Being in a damp corner of the country we know all too well the impact heavy kit can have on the soil and the performance of the subsequent crops. We need to leave the field as we found it.”

## Operator's View

Spending the lion's share of time in the seat in the 990, operator Dan Chanin appreciates the effort that has gone into making current JAGUARS as driver-friendly as possible.

“The new screen and armrest make setting changes so straightforward and the ability to swap the role of the various joystick buttons to suit the job you're doing is brilliant. It's so much quieter too – in fact when I answer the phone on Bluetooth I'm often asked if I'm actually at work! But at the end of the day what it's all about with a forager is what you can get out of it – the 990 is unbeatable for output. The new engine just hangs on in there so much better than anything we've have before – you barely ever feel the revs start to drop.”



## Why JAGUAR?

**“Over the last 40 years I have seen huge developments in the CLAAS forager range and I’m proud to have been involved in some of that development work.**

In the early ‘80s those first 690s revolutionised the way we did our job and that’s true of today’s machines too – every step of the way we’ve seen the efficiency of our operation improve.

When you look at the evolution of the JAGUAR over the last four decades, it’s been quite something. I might not be here to see what comes in the next 40 years but you never know!”



## Why CLAAS?

“We’ve always stuck with CLAAS choppers because they’ve always done the job we’ve needed them to do.

**They’ve always been the highest output machines on the market and the chop quality is good, especially in maize. They’re easy to work on and all our guys are familiar with them and can get them set up to get the most out of them.**

The JAGUARs we had have always been super reliable but should anything go wrong the back-up we get from the dealer network is superb – hence why we have the faith to run them to a good age.”