

www.challenger-ag.com

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF FARMING'S FUTURE

Challenger
SERIOUS MACHINERY

Challenger is a registered trademark of Caterpillar Inc.
and is used under license by AGCO Corporation 

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF FARMING'S FUTURE

When considering changing farming systems or investing in new equipment, the best source of information is often those who have already made the move. That's why we've asked Challenger users to tell you about their change to using our range of powerful tracked tractors.

"So now you don't have to take just our word for it that Challenger reduces costs, increases output, offers build quality, reliability and operator comfort second-to-none. Those who already own and operate Challenger tractors are more than happy to say it too.

Not only have they spoken to our writer in interviews at their farm offices, they are also willing to talk to you, to tell you more about how they use their machinery and the advantages that Challenger tracked tractors have brought to their farming businesses. That's why each and every one of the farmers and managers featured in these pages has provided their contact details: so that you can e-mail or phone with your particular queries, to verify the reliability of Challenger tractors from those who operate them, to ascertain the real cost savings that can be achieved and the operating advantages they offer.

You'll know, of course, of the changes that have taken place at Challenger, with AGCO buying the business from Caterpillar in 2002. One of the results has been changes in the Challenger dealership network, and now those changes are completed we know we can provide the standard of back-up that our customers demand and expect from a premium brand.

We believe we have the best tractors available for high output work. Challenger tractors are machines designed without compromise. They were conceived as tracked machines by the recognised world leader in track engineering - Caterpillar. And now that Challenger is part of the AGCO machinery line, the design and engineering is still Caterpillar. There's nothing else on the market designed and built specifically as a tracked machine - just Challenger.

Our commitment isn't just to design and engineering. At Challenger, we believe that back-up starts with the manufacturer, so we work hand-in-hand with the carefully selected farm machinery dealerships through which Challenger sales and service is provided to our farmer customers. We are always available to support our dealers and our customers. We're more than happy to advise you on how Challenger can be used to improve efficiency in your business.

Challenger is a superior product with superior performance. You can really see what you are getting for your money. Running costs and cost of ownership are similar to wheeled tractors of the same horsepower. The plus factor from Challenger is higher output.

More acres cultivated and sown every working day mean reduced crop establishment costs. It means you can farm more acres without extra labour. It means crops are sown at the right time and, because Challenger's tracks provide more traction without compaction, it means better yields and higher profitability.

As I said before, you don't just have to take our word for it. Those already using Challenger tractors will tell you exactly the same.

In the following pages we've also taken the opportunity to introduce your local Challenger dealership. In all probability you'll already know the business because all are well established and highly regarded farm machinery dealerships. Feel free to contact their Challenger specialist without obligation. It's the next step in ensuring your business is ready to challenge the future."



Richard Shelton
Challenger Sales Manager, UK & Eire
Tel: 01709 876054 Fax: 01709 877243
Mobile: 07798 585421
E-mail: richardshelton@uk.agcocorp.com



"WE USE LESS HORSEPOWER WHILE COVERING AN EXTRA 2,000 ACRES"



When Philip Chamberlain bought a 306hp Challenger MT765 tracked tractor, he regarded it as a powerful puller for minimal tillage cultivations. But when the cultivations were completed, he tried it on the drill and discovered it was an excellent tractor for sowing, working faster than the wheeled tractor he'd used and leaving no wheeling.

So he abandoned his plan of swapping the 765 for a 500hp MT865 when it became available, and bought the 865 as well.

Philip runs Crowmarsh Battle Farms Ltd, a 4,500-acre family farming business at Wallingford, Oxfordshire. One-third of the land is owner-occupied and the remainder is farmed on five whole-farm contracts. There are 3,800 acres of winter and spring combinable crops - wheat, barley, oilseed rape, beans and linseed - on land from the banks of the Thames up into the Chilterns and ranging from light to heavier, including gravel, flint and chalk.

"We were moving into minimal tillage and had a 4.5-metre Simba Solo demonstration machine behind our 350hp articulated wheeled tractor," Philip explained. "It was apparent that the tractor wasn't going to cope and, if we wanted to min till a considerable area, we didn't want to use equipment less than 4.5m. We needed a tractor to pull it and started looking at tracks.

So for the 2002 autumn cultivations season, the 306hp Challenger MT765 was bought with a 4.5m Solo and a 6.5m press from local dealer Lister Wilder, on the understanding that the tractor would be changed the following year when the more powerful Challenger MT800 Series became available. The Solo would also be changed for a 6m version.

"But we were so taken with the drilling performance of the MT765, that we decided to keep it and move up from a 6m to an 8m Väderstat drill for it. Where we do plough, the 765 is more than adequate for our 11-furrow plough on our soils. We also use the 765 with a spring tine cultivator and a press to make spring seedbeds."

The vigorous cultivating action of the Solo, with subsoiling points working below disc level, isn't needed on all the land every year, so Philip plans to buy a second, lighter, min till cultivator.

"We'll choose a machine with a power requirement that will allow the Challenger 765 to pull it at the lower end of the cultivator's speed range while the 865 will pull at the top of the speed range. So we'll be able to use it on either tractor at the correct speed. I'm also planning to change the single press for a heavier Culti Press because when we go right behind the combine we need something heavier for more firming. We'll also use it on land ploughed or Soloed in the autumn for spring crops."

The faster workrate offered by the Challenger tractor now provides the opportunity for Philip to stop using chemicals in places, and plough instead. And their capacity for work has led to a machinery sharing agreement with a cousin who farms locally.

"Four years ago, I was using 350hp and 325hp articulated tractors and a 175hp tractor on the drill. Now with the 500hp and 306hp Challengers moving all the soil and drilling, we are using less horsepower while covering an extra 2,000 acres. Then we had 850hp doing 3,000 acres and now, including the land covered in the machinery sharing agreement, we have 806hp doing around 5,000 acres."

The higher output achieved using the wider drill with the Challenger also allows crops to be sown in better conditions.

"Now, we can stop when conditions are not right, as we can go faster when they are," explains Philip. "Previously, no matter how early we started sowing, we always ended up with 10 per cent left to do when the rain came. Also, the low ground pressure of the Challenger for top work doesn't give any panning. So we can go sooner or later than we would have in the past without causing damage."

"In perfect conditions you could do it all with wheeled tractors, but that's probably only one year in five. Because of the power of the tracked Challengers, we've been able to go to wider implements and increase output. The tracked tractors have been the most significant contributors to higher output."

Crowmarsh Battle Farms Ltd, Preston Crowmarsh, Wallingford, Oxon.

In addition to 3,800 acres of crops grown on owner-occupied and contract-farmed land, tractors, cultivators and drill also handle a further 1,200 acres of work under a machinery sharing agreement. The land ranges from light to heavier soils from the Thames valley up into the Chiltern Hills.

Machinery: A 500hp Challenger MT865 with Auto Guide does primary cultivations with a 6m Simba Solo and a 6.6m Culti Press. A 306hp Challenger MT765 works with an 11 furrow plough, 8m Väderstat drill and spring tine cultivator.

Contact: Philip Chamberlain, Managing Director.
E-mail: philip.chamberlain@farmline.com

"YOU CAN TELL IT'S THE BUSINESS!"

Profitability is the aim at Gawdy Hall Estates Ltd, and in the 18 years that Managing Director David Green has been at the helm, it's an aim that has always been achieved. Arable cropping accounts for 75 per cent of the turnover of the 2,000-acre business. Half the cropped land is in winter wheat and half in break crops - predominantly winter rape plus vining peas and winter beans. Yields are limited by the soil, and five-year averages are 3.66t/acre for wheat and 30cwt/acre of oilseed rape.

Equipment purchases are made with that profitability aim in mind, and the newest item of machinery is a 306hp Challenger MT765 delivered in July 2003. It was bought on 30in tracks, specifically for top work, replacing a 235hp wheeled tractor. David wanted a tractor that offered lower ground pressure with a better power-to-weight ratio; that didn't leave wheelings from large tyres; that had better grip and more pulling power; and offered a better ride for the operator.

"We couldn't put the wheeled tractor on some operations because it didn't have the pulling power and there were issues with compaction and wheelings," he said. "I wanted to achieve lower ground pressure."

A demonstration of a Challenger tracked machine showed it was the right tractor. "When we had a demo of the Challenger, it blew us away - it was superb," said David. "You can tell it's the business."

David Green hadn't done business before with Challenger dealer Thurlow Nunn Standen and was a little concerned that they were based about 30 miles away. "But James Thurlow is very knowledgeable and promised us good service - and we've had it."

Gawdy Hall Estates already operated a tracked machine from a different manufacturer, so why not go for the same again? "The Challenger is 52hp more and is better balanced in terms of weight distribution," explained David. "It puts more of its tracks on the ground because the Challenger's idler wheels are full width and the configuration of the tracks and running gear is heavier. It's built around tracks and not wheels."

"The Challenger also offered a better working environment in terms of a bigger, more comfortable cab with a better driving position, controls to hand and driver information, and the visibility is much better. The ride is also superior."

The farm is on Beccles Series soils, mostly medium clay loams with some sandy soil and some heavier. For cultivations the Challenger MT765 works with a 6.3m Väderstat Rexus press cultivator or a 6m power harrow. For deeper work it pulls a 7-leg Flatlift and for sowing it is equipped with a 6m Väderstat tine drill. It also does some ploughing using a seven-furrow fully-mounted variable width plough. "The extra power and traction of the Challenger has upped our work rates," says David. "With the Rexus cultivator we cover up to 150 acres a day and we drill 100 acres a day."

"Our average field size is only 20 acres - the largest is 88 acres and the smallest is 5 acres. The turning radius of the Challenger means that field size isn't an issue. We farm mostly within a ring fence, so there's little roadwork except when working on other farms. When we've finished our own cultivations and drilling, the Challenger is used for contract mole ploughing, cultivating and drilling. Now we have the Challenger, our biggest compaction problem is the combine. It can weight up to 25 tonnes with a full tank!"



Gawdy Hall Estates Ltd, Lodge Farm, Harleston, Norfolk.

A 2,000 acre farming business on Beccles Series medium clay loam growing 750 acres of winter wheat, 505 acres of winter oilseed rape, 70 acres of winter beans and 180 acres of vining peas.

Machinery: A 306hp Challenger MT765 tractor is used for the bulk of the top work, carrying out most of the cultivations and all of the sowing. It is also used for subsoiling and occasional ploughing. The equipment it uses includes a 6m power harrow, 6.3m Väderstat Rexus press cultivator, 6m Väderstat tine drill, 7-leg Flatlift subsoiler and 7-furrow mounted variable-width plough.

Contact: David Green, Managing Director.

Tel: 07879 483588.

E-mail: gawdy@farmersweekly.net

"THE CHALLENGER IS RELIABLE AND STRONG"

Even in the driest part of England, autumn cultivations and drilling need to be completed quickly so that you can get off the land before the weather closes in. Robert Bache should know. As a director of Wallasea Farms, he's

Paul Stinson is the Challenger operator at Wallasea Farms



Since Robert took over the management of the farms in 1997, he's implemented a structured plan to upgrade machinery, cut costs and improve output. Challenger tractors are part of this plan, introducing powerful tracked machines. "When I came here, we had quite a lot of smaller power units operating smaller equipment," he said. "It was costly and slow and we weren't getting the crop establishment we needed on the heavy land."

"The machinery was too light, and while there are now better machines for making a seedbed, they take some pulling. We looked at equipment for ploughing and non-inversion, and the machines we thought would be best to make a good seedbed were the 8.3m Väderstat Rexius twin press and the 8m Väderstat drill." The largest tractors on the farms at the time were 212hp four-wheel drive, so a 340hp Caterpillar Challenger 75E was introduced.

"It was our first rubber-tracked crawler, and I was very pleased with the job it did. Working with the Rexius it gave us a good seedbed in the minimum number of passes, far better establishment, and a good soil environment for even germination of blackgrass so that we could deal with it with herbicide."

"We bought a further press and drill for the land on the other side of the river. At the time, Challenger wasn't yet offering the new track configuration, and we

farming 5,500 acres of heavy marine silt clay mostly on the Essex marshes - at Wallasea Island on the south side of the Crouch estuary, across the river at Burnham-on-Crouch, and around Colchester.

bought a 400hp machine of another make. Shortly afterwards, the Challenger 800 Series was introduced and I was wanting to replace a 260hp wheeled tractor. It, and another tractor were sold and replaced with a Challenger MT855."

The 450hp tracked machine works with the same cultivations and drilling equipment, as well as a nine-leg Keeble subsoiler with 18 leading chisel edges. "So we make good use of its horsepower," says Robert.

"When land isn't being ploughed and the straw has been baled we put in the Challenger 855 with the subsoiler. I'm convinced this is a vital catalyst to yield. Marsh soil destructures easily and we need to restructure it annually. Then we have a carefully timed follow-up of one or two passes of the press before the clods bake."

"We plough between 1,200 and 1,700 acres with a 12-furrow plough which is usually pulled by the Challenger 75E and occasionally by the 855. We've also bought a two-leg mole plough to make as much use of the power as we can, and it can work through the night."

"The Challenger is extremely reliable and strong but it's not over complicated. In fact, it's less complex than some wheeled tractors we've had. For pulling we want a reliable engine, gearbox and hydraulics, and a comfortable cab.

"While the combines are going, the tractors work one shift, but when harvesting is finished they don't stop and work round the clock on two shifts. These tracked machines do 900-1,000 hours a year, and most of that is between the end of July and 10th October. We want to be all drilled by then as you can't leave it too late on this soil."

The Challenger tractors provide the power and grip needed for fast working when the conditions are right. As a result, cultivations and drilling can be timed to make the most of the moisture available in the soil.

"Another critical thing is to pull the cultivator at high speed, on top, without any slippage. We go at 12-15kph, and the power of the Challengers allows us to do that. Even at 26 tonnes, the Challenger 855 gives a light footprint."

"It's vital to us that if a machine goes down, it is quickly repaired. The Challenger 855 is on a five-year service contract. Bob Crawford is our dealer and he has good people working for him. When we are working through the night, we know that we can call on them if we need to." It hasn't happened so far. In its first busy season, the only dealer attention needed for the new Challenger MT855 was for an air conditioning fault that was quickly fixed!

Wallasea Farms, Wallasea Island, Rochford, Essex.

A 5,500-acre farming business on the Essex marshes growing wheat, rape, peas, beans and some lucerne. The rotation on the heavy marine silt clay is mostly two wheats and a break crop although in some places only first wheats are grown and there are other areas of continuous wheat.

Machinery includes: A 450hp Challenger MT855 and a 340 hp Challenger 75E, a 8.3m Väderstat Rexius double press, 8m Väderstat Rexius drills, a 9-leg Keeble subsoiler, a two-leg mole plough and a 12-furrow reversible plough.

Contact: Robert Bache, Director.
E-mail: robert.bache@wallaseafarms.demon.co.uk

Until harvest 2003, David Runciman was growing 800 acres of cereals. Now, following the establishment of Chirnside Farmers Ltd, a joint

venture business with two other local farmers, he's managing 2,500 acres and, with his partners, plans to develop the business further.

The three directors of Chirnside Farmers - David Runciman, Rob Cowe and Mark Tullie - have active roles in the business. Each also has a speciality. David is the cereal grower, Rob grows potatoes and vegetables and Mark finishes cattle. Their joint company allows each of them to concentrate on their specialities with David managing their joint total of 2,500 acres of cereals.

The operational base for Chirnside Farmers is David's farm at Edington Mains, Chirnside, Berkshire. The joint company owns all the machinery used in the cereal enterprises - headed by a 306hp Challenger MT765 tracked tractor - employs two full-time men and has use of grain drying and storage at Edington Mains. Although only operating since harvest 2003, the partnership has dramatically reduced machinery and labour requirements which has helped cut fixed costs to around £125-£140 per ha below the industry average.

One of the first things the partners reviewed was machinery which would offer economies of scale. "For tractors, we discussed whether wheels or tracks would be most suitable," said David. "Wheels are cheaper, but with tracks the tractor would come within transport width restriction and could go on the road legally instead of all



the problems with using double wheels. Tracks had other benefits too - less compaction and output from the tractor would be greater."

After a visit to the 2002 Smithfield Show to see a particular tracked machine they returned home having placed an order for a different one. "The machine we had gone to see is really a wheeled tractor with tracks added," explained David. Then he looked at the Challenger, and it was a different beast altogether. It's made for the job and offered everything we wanted."

"The Challenger is the complete machine - it's good on the road, offers cab comfort and the build quality is excellent. It's the right machine for the job. And, most important, we have a good reliable dealership with Ancroft Tractors. They are very reliable and are good engineers."

"We wanted to equip ourselves so that we can work in whatever way the weather dictates. We didn't want to go completely for minimal tillage and, if we need to, we have the capacity to plough everything. The aim is for around 50% min till."

The equipment chosen for use with the Challenger MT765 is an 8.2m Väderstat Carrier cultivator, a 6.2m Väderstat Rexius Twin cultivator and press, and a 6m Väderstat drill.

Chirnside Farmers Ltd, Edington Mains, Chirnside, Berkshire.

A joint venture farming business formed by three neighbouring farmers to manage and carry out all the work on their 2,500 acres of cereals. They intend to develop their business further with like-minded farmers and landowners.

Ploughing in the first season was done with two 5-furrow ploughs on wheeled tractors but a new 8-furrow plough has been bought for use on the land with the Challenger or in the furrow with a new 285hp wheeled tractor.

In its first season, the Challenger did both the cultivations and the drilling, and David has been impressed by the speed at which it covers the ground. "In a full day's drilling we can do 150 acres," he says. "We've sown approaching 600 acres of spring barley in just five days. Previously, working with 4m power harrows, we would have been there for a fortnight."

"Our driver absolutely loves the Challenger. The cab has it all, and he's still fresh at the end of the day."

As well as the right machinery, David stresses the importance of establishing joint venture farming businesses on a sound legal and financial footing. He and his partners employed specialists Active Business Partnerships, to develop the concept and ensure they set up a robust legal structure and to advise on financial planning and monitoring.

Machinery: A 306hp Challenger MT 765 does most of the cultivations and drilling using an 8.2m Väderstat Carrier, a 6.2m Väderstat Rexius Twin and a 6m Väderstat drill.

Contact: David Runciman, Managing Partner.
Tel: 01890 818180.
E-mail: chirnsidefarmers@btinternet.com

"IT'S THE RIGHT MACHINE FOR THE JOB"



"WE CAN PLAN NOW, AND BE IN CONTROL"

For someone managing 10,000 acres of East Anglia's most intensively cropped land, David Walker seems remarkably relaxed - especially as it's only the third week of April. "This year we've planted our 1,000 acres of potatoes in four weeks, our sugar beet was drilled in six days and the land is all ready for the brassicas," he says. "Because we can do more acres a day with our Challengers, we're on top of the job."

Lincolnshire Field Products farms on the silt soils around Spalding and Holbeach, in Lincolnshire. It's productive land, and around half the cropping is brassicas - brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage - which stock every ASDA supermarket in the country. Then there are the potatoes and sugar beet, plus vining peas, cereals and oilseed rape.

It's not land that's easily managed, especially with field operations going on year-round. The ground is easily compacted and can cap if worked finely just before rain. There are two reasons why David's team is now on top of its work - a decent spell of weather obviously helped, and they now have the capacity to cover the acres faster when conditions are right thanks to three Challenger tractors.

"We'd been waiting for a rubber tracked tractor that could really pull and go on the road," explained David. "And these new Challengers turn without scrubbing the ground because the inner track just slows down rather than stops. So when we tried one, we said that if it could plough on our ground we'd have it, and it did!" The first of the 306hp Challenger MT765 tractors, bought from local dealer Chandlers, at Holbeach, was delivered in November 2002. Its day-to-day performance fulfilled the promise shown by the demo, so it was joined by two more bought in August 2003 and March 2004.

"Our reason for changing to the Challengers was to keep down our costs of production," says David. "It means we don't need so many smaller tractors and can operate with bigger implements. We are now in a position to take on all eventualities."

If the three Challengers hadn't been bought, David says he would have needed five new wheeled tractors instead. "In the past, we always needed to have extra capacity to make sure we could get the work done, even if

conditions weren't ideal. Because the Challengers give us the ability to cover the ground faster, we can wait until we have better conditions. We don't have to force anything now, and can hit the ground at the optimum time.

"Although the Challengers are our main primary cultivation tractors, we can even use them for working down the ground for pea and sugar beet seedbeds because of their low ground pressure."

"Because our soil packs down, we used to plough everything, but didn't really have the capacity to do all the work at the right time. Now, because the tractors aren't causing compaction, we won't plough the cereal land apart from every fourth year for black grass control. We use the Culti Press and Triple Press with tines on the back to go down to 8-9in. Where we do plough, we use two subsoil blades, which should get rid of any pan. If we have bad harvest conditions we can use a subsoiler where it is needed."

Introduction of the Challengers has allowed David to reduce herbicide use on the brassica land. Previously, to conserve moisture, weeds used to be sprayed off in the growing season on land that had been ploughed over winter but would not be planted until June or July. Now the Challengers can run over the ground quickly with a combination of heavy tines and a press.

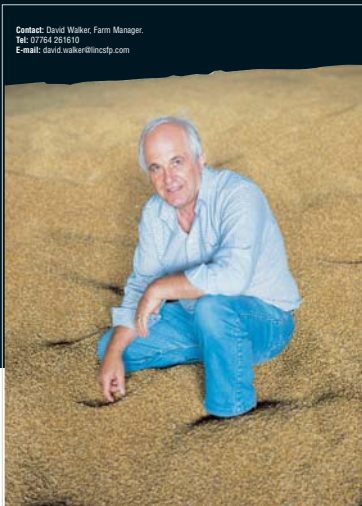
"We can plan now, and be in control. These tractors have reduced our operating costs and everything is done more timely," added David. "With such a large area of brassicas - some of it growing two crops a year - there's rarely a lull in the workload. So local Challenger dealer Chandlers carries out servicing and maintenance on the tractors at times that fit in with fieldwork needs. As a result, when the weather is right, the three Challengers are ready to go, so that David and his team are always on top of the job."

Lincolnshire Field Products, Wykeham, Spalding, Lincolnshire

This 10,000 acre farming business on light and medium silt land produces brassica crops, potatoes, sugar beet, vining peas, cereals and oilseed rape.

Machinery: The farm operates a large fleet of tractors headed by three Challenger MT765 306hp tractors with three-point hitches. The equipment they operate includes 6-metre rotary cultivators, 6m power harrows, seven-furrow mounted reversible ploughs, 8-metre discs and press, 6m Simba Culti Press, 6m Knight Triple Press, 8m Horsch cereal drill, Flatlift subsoiler.

Contact: David Walker, Farm Manager.
Tel: 07764 261610
E-mail: david.walker@lincsfp.com



"IT USES LESS FUEL PER HECTARE AND HAS A FASTER WORKRATE"

Travelling with farm machinery on the busy roads around Teesside, farmer and contractor William Wardman is conscious of the need to comply with road regulations.



Contact: William Wardman, Managing Director.
Tel: 07831 854269
E-mail: wwardman@farming.co.uk

That was his initial reason for turning to tracked tractors as his power requirement grew with the expanding size of his business. His farming and contract work has quadrupled in the past 15 years with 2,500 acres of his own, 1,200 acres contract farmed, and contract work on a further 1,000 acres. From end to end, the land he works stretches 54 miles.

His team of two powerful Challenger tractors keeps within the required 3.5m width for running on the road, and because they cover 200 acres a day, they are always on the move. "We don't worry about moving when we have to," says William. "In fact there's never a day when our Challengers aren't on the public road."

"Eight years ago we got to the point where we needed 4m drills and 4m power harrows but dual wheels couldn't be used. We needed bigger kit that folded to three metres."

So that was when he made his first move from wheeled tractors to tracks, and bought a 200hp Caterpillar Challenger 45. That was later upgraded to a Challenger 85E which worked with a 4m Simba Solo cultivator press. A second Challenger, a 55 was bought in the wet spring of 2000 when the wheeled tractor normally used for sowing couldn't pull the drill. Also, with quite a lot of steep land, and because of the Simba Solo's high draft requirement, the 85E struggled at times.

"We either needed more horsepower to pull the Solo or we needed a different implement," said William. So he did both, and in 2003 bought a 500hp Challenger MT865 with Auto Guide, and a 6-metre Gregoire-Besson Discordon - a combination of discs followed by 13 subsoil legs with hydraulic control, a further gang of discs and a press.

Purchasing the new Challenger, by then in the AGCO equipment line, meant working with a new dealer. "We were concerned because Peacock & Binington are a lot further away from us," William said. "But the machine's reliability and their service has been good. The product is right and P & B are more than capable."

For the 2004 season, the Challenger 55 has been traded for a new 306hp Challenger MT765, also with Auto Guide satellite controlled steering. "We've got them both with the satellite equipment for night working. The operator had been happy with the 55, but he has a bad back and the 765 has extra comfort as well as Auto Guide."

After one season of using Auto Guide on the 865, William is pleased with the results. When autumn cultivations begin, the 865 will work with the Discordon while the 765 pulls a Simba Culti Press. From mid August the 765 will be on the drill during the day and the Culti Press at night - "although the satellite navigation will give us the option of drilling at night if we need to," adds William.

In a year, the 500hp 865 has clocked up 1,000 hours - about 400 hours less than the 85E had to do. "It uses more fuel per hour, but less per hectare, and we have a faster workrate with the wider cultivator. In fact, the 865 can pull faster than you want to go. We put the 13 subsoil legs of the Discordon down to 18 inches on tough land, and it was just play for the 865. As well as the power, these new Challengers are in a different league with their power sensitive steering and suspension."

W Wardman Ltd, Thrushwood Farm, Redcar, Cleveland.

This busy farming and contracting business farms 2,500 acres on its own account, has contract farming agreements on another 1,200 acres and does contract work on a further 1,000 acres, mostly stubble to stubble. It also has a beef finishing enterprise and does B&B for cattle during the winter as well as running a substantial horse livery yard.

Machinery: The bulk of cultivations and drilling is done with a 500hp Challenger MT865 with Auto Guide and a 306hp Challenger MT765 with Auto Guide. They work with a 6-metre Gregoire-Besson Discordon, 6.6m Simba Culti Press + Cambridge rolls, and a 6m Vaderstad drill.

"COSTS HAVE BEEN SLASHED FOR ALL THE PARTNERS INVOLVED"

When three Essex farmers got talking about the future, they all found that they were struggling to renew machinery, couldn't expand and needed to cut costs. As a result

they held a collective farm sale, selling 150 lots of machinery and replacing them with a total of only seven or eight items in order to work in partnership.



Four years on and the partnership, AWT Farm Services, has expanded from three members to five, the area farmed has gone up from 1,700 acres to 4,300 acres, and the field work is spearheaded by a new 500hp Challenger MT865 tracked tractor with GPS Auto Guide self steering.

"The five partners are all purely arable farming and some have outside interests," explained Anthony Wiseman, who farms at The Roos, Saffron Walden. "Two of us manage the partnership's farming and do the day-to-day work, with my father helping out, and we employ two students at harvest." When the partnership was formed in 2000, the major items of machinery purchased were a Caterpillar Challenger 85E tractor, a Simba Solo 4.5m cultivator, a 5.5m Simba Double Press and an 8m Horsch drill.

The partnership was doing all the cultivations, drilling and combining, and two years on, when another partner joined with an additional 650 acres, they agreed to do everything together, including spraying and fertiliser spreading, cropping the land in blocks. The purchase of additional land by one partner and the introduction of a fifth partner brought the total to 4,300 acres.

To handle the expanded acreage, the 85E was replaced in 2003 with the 500hp Challenger MT865 bought from dealer AT Oliver and Son,

Luton, with a full service contract. The cultivations equipment was upgraded to a 6m Solo and a 6.6m Double Press.

"The big Challenger has probably replaced 10 tractors," says Anthony. "Before we formed the partnership, we all operated 120hp-150hp tractors, with everything ploughed and conventionally farmed. It was labour intensive and costly."

"Now we use minimum cultivations to get over the ground as quickly as possible. This season the Challenger 865 has done mole draining, all the cultivations on over 3,000 acres and drilled 4,000 acres. We need the tractor to pull, so it's weighted up to the maximum of 26 tonnes, and a three-point linkage isn't necessary."

"The GPS Auto Guide steering is an expensive extra, but it's well worth it. I used the automatic steering for all the cultivations, working the ground in lands. Because it always steers a parallel course, you are not left with awkward triangles in the middle." It improved productivity by 15 per cent. "Doing the cultivations at 10-11kph, I covered 100 acres a day. Drilling was done at 16-18kph, doing up to 250 acres a day. I used Auto Guide for 1,000 acres of drilling, with no markers on the drill. The system is dependable and accurate."

"While doing the cultivations with the automatic steering, the cab became my mobile office. It allowed me to spend a lot of time on the phone, ordering seed and chemicals, while the tractor got on with the job.

"The new Challenger is so different from the old one, it's unbelievable," adds Anthony. "The old one was solid and reliable - an engine on tracks. The 865 is the next generation. It's still a 16-litre engine on tracks but it has got the sophistication. For example, the One-Touch controller does everything at the flick of a switch. When I'm drilling, I use it to bring in the marker, lift the drill, reduce engine speed, and switch off Auto Guide. I just turn the tractor and touch the switch again to start work. The sophistication is there to use when you want it.

"Our aim has been higher output from the equipment without affecting the quality of the work," says Anthony. "Maintaining yield is essential. Costs have been slashed for all the partners involved and there is great scope for future expansion. We could expand the acreage without any significant expenditure, as we haven't even explored the idea of working through the night on another shift. With the lights on the Challenger, it's almost like working in the day."

AWT Farm Services

The Roos, Saffron Walden, Essex.

This farming partnership does all the fieldwork and manages the cropping for its five partners on 4,000 acres which stretch across a 50-mile area. Soils range from heavy Essex chalky boulder clay to light chalk producing winter and spring crops of wheat, barley, oilseed rape and beans.

Machinery: A 500hp Challenger MT 865 with Auto

Guide does most of the cultivations and all of the drilling using a 6m Simba Solo, a 6.6m Simba Double Press and an 8m Horsch drill.

Contact: Anthony Wiseman, Joint Managing Partner
Tel: 07764 589587

E-mail: rootm@farmersweekly.net

CHALLENGER TEAM

Since its introduction in 1997, the Challenger tracked tractor has been setting new standards in tractor development. The rubber track system has enabled farmers and growers to advance their businesses profitably whilst at the same time ensuring that their principal asset, the soil, is kept in optimum condition.

The demand for higher and higher hp tractors was forcing manufacturers to build larger and heavier units that created compaction, which in turn required more hp to relieve the damage the following season. This trend was becoming unsustainable and the large American articulated tractors were unsuitable for the typical UK field size. The Challenger tracked tractor was the solution to this problem; powerful and yet compact, highly manoeuvrable and the superior grip meant that all the engine hp could be converted into positive tractive effort.

Now in its third generation, the MT series Challenger now delivers more; more hp with larger CAT engines; stronger and more efficient transmissions; sophisticated stress-free working environment for the operator and an unrivalled ride due to the unique track suspension system.

This results in a tractor that is a superior product, built for high output under widely varying field conditions. Its design provides higher tractive effort with lower ground pressure, making it the ideal power unit for use with the wider cultivating and drilling equipment now available.

It is well suited to the differing soil types in the region and allows growers to achieve real cost reductions in crop establishment and production costs. Challenger tractors can be used in crop establishment systems that are plough-based, minimum tillage or a combination of the two. And with power outputs ranging from 255hp to 564 max hp, the new Challenger MT700 and MT800 series tractors are suitable for all applications.

However, it is our customers who have the final word; their critical input into the development of the new MT range has resulted in a tractor that delivers exactly what they require to maximize their business potential.

Their own testimonials tell us that the Challenger remains the most innovative and productive tractor they can own.



Find out more about how you can use Challenger in your farming or contracting business.

Tel: 024 76694400 E-mail: richardshelton@uk.agcocorp.com