



Assets and investments

Stuart and Steve Wronski farm 800 acres near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire using a fleet of five of John Deere's most sought-after models. Simon Henley finds out how a pair of John Deere 4755s, a 6910, a 7710 and a 6930 – all highly coveted models with rock-solid residuals – fit the bill in this modern farming business; pictures by Jonathan Page.



JOHAN DEERE HAS PRODUCED MORE than its fair share of iconic tractors over the years and the five models operated by Stuart and Steve Wronski on their 800-acre farm near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire are certainly candidates for any Tractor Hall of Fame.

Four of the Wronskis' five mainline John Deeres are already targets for collectors, even though they are still more than capable of pulling their weight in a commercial farming operation.

If these tractors, comprising of two 4755s, a 6910 and a 7710, were players in a poker game, they'd have plenty of tricks left up their sleeve. But before dealing out the aces in this pack, let's first introduce their owners. Stuart and Steve Wronski's grandfather came to Britain from Poland at the end of the Second World War, settling just a few miles from where the family live today.

"My grandmother was a local girl, who grandfather met just after the war," explains Steve. "Our father Yurek was born and raised in this area and the family has been here ever since."

Yurek, an engineer by trade, established a successful business manufacturing window hardware. He wanted somewhere in the country with a few acres of land to bring up his two sons, so in 1987 he bought the farm his son eldest son Stuart now calls home, along with 90 acres of land.

Main Picture: John Deeres rule in the tractor fleet operated by the Wronski family at Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, from left: 6930, 6910, 7710 and two 4755s.

Below Left: Brothers Steve, left, and Stuart Wronski and their father Yurek farm 800 acres near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire. They bought their first John Deere, a 4650 model, in 2004 and have since standardised on the marque.

Below Right: The older of two John Deere 4755 models in the fleet, this 1990 example has the exhaust and air cleaner stacks on the bonnet. It was purchased second-hand from a dealer in Kent and has clocked a mere 2552 hours.

Initially, Yurek only wanted a few acres, but with the house and 90 acres coming as a job lot, he decided to farm the land, a decision that would ultimately lead to the creation of a separate business that would provide a living and career for his sons. Today the farming operation consists of 650 acres of combinable crops and 150 acres of grassland which is part of a stewardship scheme.

One might be forgiven for thinking that this farming enterprise has been all-Deere since its conception over 25 years ago. Quite the opposite is true because the first tractor to appear was a Fordson Dexta, followed shortly after by a Ford Force 4000 fitted with a loader.

"My brother and I were still very young when we moved here, so we didn't really do too much with tractors like the Dexta," admits Stuart. "I remember that the first four-wheel drive tractor we had was a Ford 4610, which was followed by a Ford 7610 and an IH 955.

"By this time, Dad was taking on more land, so we needed bigger equipment with more power. He also liked collecting tractors. When we were kids he

bought a Fordson Standard, an E27N Major and a Power Major so that he had a set of Fordsons. These have all been sold now though."

The trend of buying Ford tractors continued well into the late 1990s, although other brands did get a look in, as Steve explains.

"We actually ran an articulated White Field-Boss tractor for a while, but I can't remember what model it was," he says. "I don't think we had it long. I remember that we also had a Ford 8600 too. This would probably have been around the time that Stuart and I were old enough to drive the tractors on the farm."

With his two sons showing a keen interest in farming, it seemed only natural for their father Yurek to continue to expand the farm's acreage, taking on more local land as it became available. By the time Stuart had finished school, the farm's prime movers had been upgraded to a six-cylinder Ford 8210, the first tractor he claims to have spent any length of time driving, plus a second IH 955XL.

Shortly after this, the family acquired two Ford 8630s, which quickly took on the role of cultivation and drilling tractors. Based on the tried and tested Ford TW-15, the modernised and improved 8630 models with Super-Q cabs and Powershift transmissions proved to be impressive tractors, although by the dawn of the new Millennium they were beginning to show their age. The family had taken on some challenging additional land in the Vale of Evesham and it was proving to be too much for the Fords. It was time to invest in some serious horsepower.

To cope with the heavy soil conditions at Evesham, Yurek purchased a second-hand John Deere 4650. He was immediately impressed by the John Deere's abundant power and, as a result, he went on to buy a John Deere 4755 from John Deere dealer Chris Tallis (now Tallis Amos Group) just two years later.

The 4755 in question was a low-hour trade-in that dealer principal Chris Tallis had actually kept to use himself. Knowing that Yurek was seriously impressed by the 4650, he offered him a deal on the big Deere and the tractor has been on the Wronskis' farm ever since.

The 4755 was the second largest of the five John Deere 55 Series models introduced in 1989. The specification of the 4755, which weighs in at 8.2t ready for battle, includes a 190hp turbo and aftercooled version of John Deere's well-proven 7.6-litre engine and a 15F/4R full powershift transmission.

The first 4755 purchased by the Wronskis dates from 1993, making it a late model with the desirable wide-step arrangement and cab pillar-mounted side exhaust stack. It is surely one of the most impressive examples in the country and without doubt one of the lowest-houred, having clocked just 3050 hours at an average of 122 hours a year.

Inside this tractor's SG2 cab everything is just as it would have been when it left the factory, while the view from the driver's seat over the tractor's vast bonnet is guaranteed to bring a smile to even the most ardent of Massey Ferguson or Ford fans.

"In the eight years we've had this tractor, aside from regular servicing and maintenance we've never laid a spanner on it," notes Stuart. "Today it shares the heavy cultivation work with our other John Deere 4755, pulling a six-furrow Dowdeswell plough. We also use it on a 3t Kuhn fertiliser spreader fitted with a PTO adapter."

If the older 4650 had impressed the Wronski family, then it would be fair to say the performance of the 4755 blew them away. It proved to be so capable that within 18 months the older tractor was deemed surplus to requirements and sold. The wind of change was in the air.





"We also sold the old Ford 8210 privately," recalls Steve. "By this time the Ford 8630s had both been sold and we were running a pair of New Holland 8360s. After three seasons these were both traded-in, one for a New Holland TM155 and one for the 2000 John Deere 6910 that we still run today."

"The 6910 was working on a farm in Gloucestershire when Chris Tallis took us to see it," he continues. "We were looking for a good mid-range tractor and this one fitted the bill perfectly. It has the TLS front axle suspension and a 40kph PowrQuad gearbox, so it was the natural choice for trailer work and it also pulls our four-furrow Lemken plough beautifully."

While the John Deere 6910 may have fitted in nicely at Slade Farm, the New Holland TM155 didn't fare so well.

"The TM155 was not what you would call a reliable tractor," explains Stuart. "The engine was magnificent and it pulled like a train, but there were electrical issues with the tractor and the gearbox

constantly needed recalibrating – it just wasn't a good tractor. We sold it back to the dealer after three seasons and replaced it with a John Deere 7710."

During this time, the family took on another farm, effectively doubling their acreage. Having been so overwhelmed by the ability of the 4755, rather than invest a fortune in a new tractor, the decision was made to track down another low-hour John Deere 4755. Stuart eventually found what the family were looking for at Southern Harvesters at Headcorn in Kent.

The problem was that there were actually two tractors – a 4755 and a 4650 – and the Southern Harvesters' salesman was adamant that they had to be sold as a pair otherwise he was going to export them both to Poland. A quick visit to see the tractors revealed that they were both in good condition and they were subsequently purchased as a brace, but the story doesn't end there.

The Wronskis only needed the 4755, so using his skill at refurbishing tractors, Steve, who has his own

Above: With its 40kph PowrQuad transmission and TLS front axle, this 2000 John Deere 6910 is great for trailer work, and it also helps out with cultivations, pulling a four-furrow Lemken plough. It replaced a Ford 8630 in the fleet and has now done 8362 hours.

Below Left: King of the hill in the Wronski fleet is this superb John Deere 4755, a 1993 model with the later side-stack exhaust and improved cab access. The 3049-hour tractor was purchased locally in 2006 as the replacement for a John Deere 4650.

private paint shop, freshened-up the 4650 and advertised it in CLASSIC TRACTOR'S classified section. It was subsequently sold after appearing in the magazine's 'Forecourt Find' feature.

The 4755 that Steve found in Kent is an earlier 1990 example with the exhaust and air cleaner stack protruding out of the bonnet. In all other respects it is very similar to its younger stablemate, with the exception that the newer tractor is fitted with a ground speed radar.

Despite the fact that it is three years older than the farm's side-stack example, this 1990 tractor has even fewer hours to its credit – just 2250 – a figure supported by its lively performance.

"Out in the field, there is nothing to tell these tractors apart," says Steve. "They both perform with equal vigour and can be interchanged between implements without any bother. We tend to use this tractor on our 5.5m Dowdeswell discs or on a 4m Kuhn power harrow."

"We like these older tractors because at the end of the day, they are doing the same job as a 200hp tractor that costs £100,000, but for a fraction of that sort of investment," he adds. "Parts are still readily available and in terms of performance, you just can't stop the engines pulling when they are working. You



Above: Both of the 4755s are fitted with near-identical SG2 cabs. Old-school interior looks Spartan by today's standards, but back in the 1980s and early 90s it was one of the ultimate operator stations. All the essential information is displayed by the IntelliTrack monitoring system with LCD readouts, a new feature that was introduced with the 55 Series in 1989.

Above Right: Basic layout of the 6910 cab is similar to the 7710, although the 20-speed 40kph PowrQuad transmission on this year 2000 tractor has a right-hand power shuttle housed in the main instrument console. Noise levels are once again tranquil at a mere 72 dB(A), not bad considering the age. All of the Wronskis' tractors have very clean cab interiors.

Right: TechCenter cab on the John Deere 7710 is still a great place of work, with very low noise levels of 72 dB(A) and one of the industry's best quality and most comfortable seats. Plastics used also feel more robust than those on its German-built 6910 counterpart. This 1999 model has the 20-speed PowrQuad transmission with left-hand power shuttle.

Below Right: According to Steve and Stuart Wronski, this 1999 John Deere 7710 with PowrQuad and TLS is their favourite 'go-to' tractor and the most versatile model on the farm. Like all their tractors it is in mint condition and has done 8321 hours.

can set the throttle of a 4755 at 1600rpm and it will pull like that all day, whatever you have behind it."

There are of course disadvantages to operating a tractor like the 4755. Both Stuart and Steve concede that leg room is not particularly abundant in the SG2 cab and that with only a 30kph top speed the 4755s are lethargic on the road. Interestingly, despite their power, these old school prime movers have a frugal appetite for diesel in comparison to their modern counterparts, as the brothers recently discovered when they purchased a modern John Deere 6930.

"The 6930 came from Chris Tallis at the Tallis Amos Group," says Stuart. "It has only done 2100 hours and is fitted with a 50kph AutoQuad gearbox, front axle suspension and four-wheel braking. It is the ideal haulage tractor as it is not only more comfortable on the road than the 6910, but also has far better braking power."

"If I do have a criticism of this tractor, it is the amount of fuel it uses," he points out. "The 6930 will easily burn up to 30 litres/hour of diesel when it's working with a 3m combi-drill or pulling our primary stubble cultivator. That's a tank full in a day. By comparison, both our 4755 models average around 25 litres/hour when they are working hard and you can run them for more than a day-and-a-half without refuelling."

We have so far overlooked another of the farm's highly revered modern classics – a John Deere 7710. This tractor was sourced from a farm in Devon and



This 1993 John Deere 4755 with side exhaust stack shares the heavy cultivation work, including ploughing with a six-furrow Dowdeswell, with a slightly older model. Apart from servicing it hasn't had a spanner on it during its eight years on the farm.



The Wronski fleet

Model	Year	Power	Hours
John Deere 4755	1990	190hp	2552
John Deere 4755	1993	190hp	3049
John Deere 7710	1999	155hp	8321
John Deere 6910	2000	138hp	8362
John Deere 6930	2010	155hp	2101

was actually a second choice as both brothers would have preferred a larger 7810. However, with less than 8000 hours under its belt, this meticulously maintained PowerQuad tractor, fitted with TLS front axle suspension, found its way to the Cotswolds. It is Steve and Stuart's favourite 'go-to' tractor.

"The beauty of the 7710 is its versatility," notes Stuart. "It is relatively compact, very manoeuvrable, a great tractor in the field and the 8.1-litre engine pulls more like it has 200hp than 160hp.

"The TechCenter cab has a lot more room than the SG2 cab and the controls are exactly where you want them, with the added bonus of HMS which makes implement management on the headlands very simple," he continues. "Its only

weakness is that it's not a great tractor for trailer work, but it's absolutely superb for pulling our 6m Weaving coulters drill."

In spite of their preference for John Deere tractors, Stuart or Steve know a total lemon when they see one. While their New Holland TM155 might not have impressed them too much during its three-year stay, it was a 1995 John Deere 8200 that spent just 18 months on the farm six years ago that gets their vote as the worst tractor they've ever owned. So poor was the performance of the 8200 that a frustrated Stuart simply decided one day to sell the tractor. The proceeds were later used to buy the farm's second 4755.

In terms of what's next, it is here that Steve and Stuart's opinions differ slightly. For Stuart, his preferred next purchase would be a low-hour, well-maintained John Deere 7930, a model that impressed him when he drove one last summer. Steve, however, still hankers after a John Deere 7810, and who can blame him.

The world of farming is changing and with profit margins for arable growers coming under pressure again, farmers need every financial edge they can get. For the Wronski family, whose fleet of classic John Deere prime movers clock no more than 200 hours apiece every year, the current answer to lower commodity prices is to continue to use a selection of some of John Deere's best-ever modern classics. They are simple to maintain, supremely reliable and mostly depreciation proof. In some cases they are even going up slightly in value! It doesn't get much better than that.

At the business end



Back-end of the John Deere 4755 looks positively skinny compared to the 7710. This is not surprising since the 4755 was the final iteration in an evolutionary process that began with the 'New Generation' Deeres in the 1960s. Maximum life is still a useful 8400kg.



Maximum lift capacity of the John Deere 6910 isn't far behind the 4755 and 7710 models at a useful 7699kg. Like the 7710 it has electronic lower link sensing. Push-back pick-up hitch provides a good view of the hook when coupling-up to trailed kit.



Muscular rear end of the farm's John Deere 7710 provides a maximum lift capacity of 8150kg (or 5650kg when measured 61cm behind the hitch points). Other features include three SCVs with pressure-release couplings and a heavy-duty Dromone hitch.