



## Who Grows Your Chips?

### **B Clarke and Sons – Froghall Farm, Huntingdon**

Barry Clarke is unique in the fact that he not only grows potatoes but owns two chip shops too! Along with his two sons Darryl, 38, and Jared, 34, they work hard to run their family business B Clarke and Sons. Barry who has worked in the farming industry since he was 16, following in his father's footsteps, has worked hard to secure a good future for his sons.

When he was old enough to begin developing his own land, Barry took on a small council holding, which is a plot of land let by the government. By 1974 Barry was running 39 acres of land and with determination and a lot of long hours, he was able to buy a farm of his own. Froghall Farm in Ramsey, Huntingdonshire is set over 100 hectares and Barry, along with eldest son Darryl, grow not just potatoes but also sugar beat and wheat.

Barry and his wife Veronica decided to buy two small fish and chip shops, Birdeys in Stanford and the Little Friar in March, and give their youngest Jared the responsibility to run them.

The potato variety which is primarily grown on the farm is Maris Piper, which provides the two shops with enough chipping potatoes to last from Christmas to mid July. Nothing beats the knowledge that their potatoes are being sold and eaten in the community. As Barry says: "It's such a satisfying job seeing the whole process, from growing the potatoes to watching them being enjoyed as chip suppers in the shops."

### **Robin Cropper – J Cropper and Sons, Lancashire**

Brothers John and Robin Cropper have been working in the potato industry since they joined their father on the farm at a young age. The Cropper family have grown and sold their produce, including potatoes, from Moss End Farm, Lancashire for the past seven generations and now mainly supply local chip shops in Liverpool.

A significant amount of their 520 hectares of farm land is used to grow Maris Piper potatoes, but wheat, barley and oats are also grown there. In total they grow around 6000 tonnes of potatoes a year, most of which are consumed within a 30 mile radius - something that they are extremely proud of.

John and Robin have found working in farming can be a very rewarding job. However it is also very hard work and sometimes frustrating. During difficult weather conditions - their average day can be in excess of 12 hours, seven days a week. They do the majority of farming and sales themselves but have two full-time tractor drivers to help with planting and harvesting. John's wife, Lesley is an integral member of the team. She deals with accounts and can provide customers with extensive traceability records for all their produce.

### **Philip Burns – C. Rayner Ltd, Great Wakering, Essex**

Philip Burns is the farm manager for C. Rayner Ltd at Oldbury Farm, where they grow and sell potatoes to chip shops and supermarkets around Essex.

Originally from a non-farming family in west Yorkshire, Philip decided on a career in farming at an early age, after watching the local farmer at work in the field behind his home. After spending three years studying farm management at the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester, his intention was to start his career in east Yorkshire. However, he was offered a position with C. Rayner Ltd in Essex and is now in his 30<sup>th</sup> year with the company.

The potato varieties Maris Piper, Desiree, Estima and Harmony are grown on 128 acres at Oldbury Farm. Although this is only 10% of the overall farming area, potatoes take up 90% of the time – due to the amount of care and attention that is needed to grow them. There are 8 full and part time workers on the farm, who help to grow, plant and distribute the potatoes to chip shops within a 20-mile radius.

Philip finds great satisfaction in seeing a good quality crop being harvested. With a successful harvest the farm can supply 40 tonnes of chipping potatoes to chip shops each week, enough to produce 50,000 portions of chips!

### **George Lambert – Denholm Potato Growers, Musselburgh**

George Lambert has been a farm manager for Denholm Potato Growers in Musselburgh for 27 years. George was fascinated by the lifestyle, after meeting a farmer on holiday and a follow up visit to his farm shortly afterwards ensured that he truly caught the farming bug. George went on to study at Edinburgh School of Agriculture, where he gained a HND in Agriculture.

Although George describes himself as a farm manager, he doesn't actually manage a farm but 60 hectares of farmland. Denholm Potato Growers lease all of their land from local farmers, rotating which fields are used each year to prevent fields being diseased and producing poor crops. The main variety of potato grown in their fields is Premier, which is then distributed to chip shops around Edinburgh. Estima potatoes are also grown and these are sold pre-packed to local supermarkets.

Planting, which runs through March and April, is the part of the job that George enjoys most. He's the first to admit though that it can be a hard time of year to work, especially if there is a lot of rain. But as George says: "I feel my hard work has been paid off when I get a good harvest and see our produce in local Scottish chippies and shops."

- ENDS -

We would love to help you out with any chip features you are planning so don't hesitate to contact us for any further information, recipes or images:

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**Editors Notes:**

Chip Shops all over the country will be taking part in National Chip Week 2009: 9-15 February 2009, when the winners of the GB's Perfect Portion awards are revealed and Keith Chegwin will be on tour to find his perfect portion!

Readers can nominate their perfect portion by visiting [www.lovechips.co.uk](http://www.lovechips.co.uk) between 12 January and 1 February 2009.

Visit [www.lovechips.co.uk](http://www.lovechips.co.uk) for a list of list of participating fish and chip shops, chip flicks, more information about what's going on during the week itself, chip recipes and fun chip facts and figures.

National Chip Week is run by the Potato Council. Potato Council supports the British potato industry, and is funded by potato growers and potato trade purchasers and is part of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board ([www.ahdb.org.uk](http://www.ahdb.org.uk))