

# NEW STORES FOR POTATOES AND CONFETTI

**HEATHER BRIGGS went along to the Potato Council's specialist event in Shropshire last month and was shown around a dual-purpose facility built to hold host grower Michael Bubbs' potato crop as well as dried flowers. Both need carefully controlled ventilation in store**

The West Midlands Potato Day was held at Lynn South Farm at Newport, hosted by one of the sector's most innovative businesses, which, in addition to growing potatoes, has diversified into producing dried flowers. Michael Bubb and two of his three sons are involved with the farm. John heads up the administration, agronomy and arable cropping while Jim (an ex-Harper Adams engineer) looks after the machinery and an internet-led flower operation trading as Shropshire Petals Ltd.

Agile, innovative thinking has resulted in the farm being able to make the most of its two stores throughout the year. From September to May, both units will be state-of-the-art potato stores, 2,500 tonnes each. When the summer comes, from July to September, they will be used for drying and storing flowers.

'Flowers and potatoes are not as far away from each other as you may think when it comes to storage,' explained Michael Bubb. 'Both need similar types of ventilation which are integral to the building, so that was our starting point.'

One store was completed in 2011, the other is almost finished. Both are well insulated, the newer of the two has computer controlled louvres and coils, and (to comply with both crops' requirements for high air volumes) has the capacity to change the air within the store in just over a minute.

'Not only will the 2014 store have the facility for actively cooling potatoes at any time, it will have heating too, so that the building will be at a constant 55°C with a relative humidity of 15% for flowers or a constant 8°C and 98% relative humidity for potatoes,' he continued.

Energy efficiency is crucial to the farm and the air-source heat pump, combined with solar panels will warm the store air and remove moisture simultaneously. 'These options will provide flexibility for the future.'

Mr Bubb pointed out that although there are many similarities between potato and flower stores, some amendments had to be made when designing the units. 'We had to adapt the layout to allow for larger floor-level laterals which ensure there is

sufficient airflow for drying the flowers. Because of the nature of that side of the business, we also added more access between stores so that the forklift would have more manoeuvrability in the summer.'

Thanks to the even ventilation, Michael's son John has found that CIPC sprout control is much easier to manage. 'We put on 23g/tonne, which is well below the legal limits, and we have been delighted by this massive achievement as we were able to enjoy the maximum benefits from CIPC without any worries about exceeding MRLs.'

He revealed that the inspiration for the flower business was the need to invest and diversify the farm to offer 'him, his father and brother a good living. The administrative structure

***The Bubbs' second potato store should be completed soon.***

