COMBINE-HARVESTERS.FARMYARD.IM

It is called a combine because it does two jobs at once

A typographic fact sheet. No photographs.

The Museum of English Rural Life puts the name in one clean sentence. Combines "are so-called because they combine the cutting of a crop—reaping—and the separation of grains from stalks—threshing."

Before one machine did both

The Museum's technology notes set the sequence out simply: the reaper, then the reaper-binder, then the thresher, then the combine "which does it all." Modern combines, the same notes say, are "controlled by computers." For most of farming history those first jobs were different days, different gangs, and different machines.

A clockwork reminder in Reading

The MERL's second formally recorded object, numbered 51/2 in January 1951, is a small clockwork model of a threshing machine, made around 1847 by Barrett, Exall & Andrewes in Katesgrove Lane, Reading. It still goes out on the Museum's handling trolley. Threshing is one of the two jobs the modern combine still does, only now it does the cutting too.

Sources, checked 17 November 2026: Ollie Douglas, "Model Thresher," 51 Voices, Object 1, The MERL; The MERL technology learning resource. This is not a MERL publication. combine-harvesters.farmyard.im is part of the ReallyByte network, run by REALLYBYTE, based in the Isle of Man. ReallyByte — Fun. Educational. Useless.