

A 'CLAAS' Act in Roscommon



Kennedy Brothers | **Agricultural Contractors** | Co. Roscommon

By Darren Bailey

The Emerald Isle – Ireland is renowned for its lush grass and mild climate.

In the small village of Ballyforan in Co Roscommon there is another shade of green, CLAAS green, thanks to the Kennedy Brothers who have no less than 10 CLAAS tractors operating within their agricultural contracting business.

The business was established back in the 1950s by Tom Kennedy who started off with a Fordson tractor which is still in the fleet today, together with a single chop harvester, mainly carrying out work for neighbours making silage and hay. In the 1980s Tom's three sons, John, Pat and Willy joined the business, growing it in size by offering new services to the community such as tillage work and plant hire. Today the 3rd generation of Kennedys, brothers Tom Jnr and John are at the helm and have expanded the business even further.

BUSINESS EXPANSION

The business harvests approximately 1,000ha of pit silage, produces 35,000 bales and empties 347 slatted tanks of slurry which alone keeps them busy for 7 months of the year. On top of the contracting

side of the business, the brothers also farm 60ha of grassland where they keep a combination of suckler beef and sheep.

To keep up with the ever demanding workload the Kennedys have an impressive fleet of 10 CLAAS tractors which comprises five ARION 650s, three ARION 640s, an ARION 630 and 620, in addition to a JAGUAR 860, DISCO 3500C and two LINER rakes.

“We purchased our first CLAAS tractor, a new ARION 640, off local dealer QUIGLEYS in 2011. We had run two other brands of tractor up until then and between mechanical issues and dealer support we wanted a change. Seamus Quigley gave us a demonstration tractor for a few days to see what we thought, and we were immediately impressed with firstly the comfort of the CLAAS as well as its performance in a nice compact tractor frame.”

CLAAS TRACTORS ARE IDEAL

“After a bit of ‘friendly negotiation’ we had a new ARION 640 bought which we only traded this year with 11,000 hours on the clock for a new ARION 650. We find the CLAAS tractors very user friendly and compact, which makes them ideal for all the work we do, as field sizes can be quite small. They are very easy to maintain and to be fair haven't given us many problems. All tractors can have a problem at some stage but what is important in our line of business is how quick we can get back working and the cost to repair.”

ARION 600 AND JAGUAR 800



“We plan to start implementing GPS technology to help optimise our performance and improve efficiency.”

Kennedy Brothers, March 2018

In the relatively short time that the Kennedys have been dealing with QUIGLEYS, they have purchased a total of 11 CLAAS tractors, two LINERS, a 2700 and 2900 and a DISCO 3500C mower. “We have a great working relationship with QUIGLEYS, they will never see us stuck. If a tractor goes into the garage for whatever reason we always get a replacement if needed, it’s that kind of level of customer service that matters to us.”

JAGUAR MILESTONE

2017 marked what the brothers themselves refer to as a milestone in the business, when they took delivery of their very first CLAAS forager, a new JAGUAR 860, purchased through their local CLAAS forager dealer KELLYS of Borris.

“We had run other makes in the past, but opted to buy a CLAAS mainly because we were very happy with the products we already had and knew the forager would be the same. We have done 1,000ha with it in its first season at silage, and cannot praise it enough. The operator comfort is what really stands out to us; you can cover 40ha a day easily and not feel it. All the controls are ergonomically located which makes running the JAGUAR a pleasure. With a new forager reliability is not an issue but one thing that is important is cost to run. After its first year it has only cost us between €3,000-4,000 (£2,200-3,000) to maintain, which is half that of what it was costing us before.”

So what are the future plans for Kennedys? “We aim to continue our working relationship with CLAAS into the future and plan to start implementing GPS technology to help optimise our performance and improve efficiency.” 

