

“This is my main tractor. This is the office.”



George Chapman

Located in the picturesque surroundings of the north Northumberland countryside, just on the edge of the Scottish border, beef and sheep farmer George Chapman farms around 1,350 acres, comprising a mix of rented, owned and shared farmed land.

It's fair to say, particularly when it comes to the view of George's location, that it's not a bad 'office' to work in. His other 'office' of choice comes in the form of CLAAS' latest generation ARION 400 series tractor, which he relies on to get the lion's share of his tractor duties done.

So far, first impressions of the tractor are good, says George; "It certainly feels like it has more power than my previous ARION 430. I also like the way you can divert all of the hydraulic oil from the back-end to the loader, to give you more lifting power and loader speed. Basically, it's a well balanced, comfortable tractor."

Main jobs for the new ARION 440 tractor include making about 1,500 round bales of silage per year with a CLAAS ROLLANT 340 baler and carting straw from 20 miles away; 30 bales at a time with a 28 foot bale trailer. "It's a great match for the baler, allowing me to bale at a comfortable forward speed, mainly using the C range of gears."

In addition, it also mows grass, spreads muck and fertiliser, and pretty much carries out anything else that needs doing on the farm, says George. "On loader work, it's got no end of power. It'll handle two round bales of silage very comfortably; if you're mucking out the sheds it'll easily tear out a tonne and a half of muck at a time with the muck grab."

"The PANORAMIC roof also offers lots of visibility for loader work, especially in and out of low sheds. I drive it more like a teleporter when on loader jobs, as it's got the capacity, the manoeuvrability and the balance. Thanks to the joystick, the 'feel' of the loader is also very good; you can precisely place things where you need them."

When ordering, requirements for the tractor by George were few, but specific; "It had to have air conditioning, integrated transmission and loader controls on one joystick and a non-parallel loader."

It's a combination which keeps things comfortable, convenient and simple, according to George; "This is my main tractor. This is the office. It's like sitting in an armchair in this tractor, as opposed to some other makes which you can bounce around in. You can easily spend 16/17 hours per day in this tractor and not get out walking like an old man."

"Controls all fall well to hand, particularly the main joystick which is integrated into the armrest. The steering wheel also moves forward, at the press of a pedal, which makes it easier to get in and out. There's also a decent amount of in-cab storage, with several compartments dotted around."

“Having the gearbox controls integrated into the joystick makes it very easy to operate when either on the road or in the field. There’s also secondary gearbox controls on the main console, which are useful for when looking round at implements.”

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As for the 16 by 16 speed, semi-powershift gearbox, George says; “It’s great to get on with. Having the gearbox controls integrated into the joystick makes it very easy to operate when either on the road or in the field. There’s also secondary gearbox controls on the main console, which are useful for when looking round at implements.”

Moving to the back of the tractor, George appreciates several of the ARION 440’s features; “I’ve got the wider arms on this tractor, which you can really push out wide when using the round baler, enabling tighter turning circles, while avoiding any contact between them and the PTO.

“This one’s also fitted with air brakes, which future proofs the tractor for when I update my trailers. And the buttons on the mudguards are a great help when hitching up to implements, especially the linkage controls and PTO buttons.

“Rear linkage lift capacity is good. It’ll easily manage two or three silage bales. Likewise, it’s capable of handling the fertiliser spinner loaded with a tonne and a half of fertiliser.

“The free-low return is a big advantage. It’s great on the post knocker, allowing you to operate the link arms and have a continuous flow of oil to the knocker. On our previous tractor, you had to jump in and out of the cab every time you wanted to move the link arms; this one you can do it all from outside the tractor.”

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As for practicalities, George is impressed by the tractor's slide-out toolbox, near the right-hand steps; "It's in a great spot to get at and it's a really good size for tool storage. It makes my life so much easier; you're not having climb in and out the cab to get things and you don't have things rolling around the cab floor, which can be dangerous. The only thing I would like to see improved is the drawbar storage. It's a little awkward to get at where it currently is."

Having had several CLAAS tractors over the years, George has certainly noticed the evolution of the brand; "There's always a progression going from one to the next and technology is always increasing. This new one has telematics fitted, which allows me to see how much fuel I've been using, what the tractor's been doing and where it's been."

"However, I think the biggest improvement is the fridge under the passenger seat. It really does keep your drinks and food cool, which has been great in some of the heat waves this summer."

But as we all know, it's not just how the tractor performs, but more often than not, how it is looked after, which is the main reason why George keeps returning to the make; "The back-up and the service from RICKERBY has been spot on. there's always someone, day or night, at the other end of the phone to help."

"It's also been a very reliable tractor, certainly more reliable than some of my previous makes of tractor. And the five year warranty gives that extra peace of mind."

