

CLAAS

BUSINESS FACTS

H Smith and Sons
Low Arkland Farm, Castle Douglas,
Dumfries and Galloway



BUSINESS TYPE

Agricultural Contracting
Beef and Sheep Farming



CONTRACTING SERVICES

Full silage operation, umbilical
and tanker slurry application,
muck spreading, lime spreading,
hedge cutting and grass re-seeding



MACHINERY

Six tractors, one set of triple mowers,
one set of front/rear mowers,
one tedder and a four-rotor rake



H SMITH & SONS

“Once we got into the manoeuvrability and capacity of a self-propelled, we knew it was the way forward.”

- 1979 JAGUAR 70SF
- 1984 JAGUAR 680
- 1988 JAGUAR 682
- 1992 JAGUAR 682
- 1996 JAGUAR 682
- 1998 JAGUAR 820
- 2002 JAGUAR 830
- 2006 JAGUAR 830
- 2010 JAGUAR 850
- 2014 JAGUAR 850
- 2017 JAGUAR 840
- 2020 JAGUAR 850
- 2023 JAGUAR 950

As the longest standing CLAAS JAGUAR self-propelled forager user and customer in the UK, there's not many that can boast the length and breadth of knowledge and experience of running JAGUARS as farming and contracting business Hugh Smith and Sons.

Having purchased the first CLAAS JAGUAR self-propelled in the UK in 1979, the family firm has since gone on to own 12 further JAGUAR foragers, with the most recent being a 950 model, bought this year for the 2024 season.

Based at Kelton, Castle Douglas, the business is run by Alan Smith, wife Kate and son Martin. Alan explains; "On the farming side, we rear 350 breeding cows and 650 breeding sheep, while the contracting side now sees us chop about 6,500 acres of grass silage per year, all within a 20 mile radius."

What was the first JAGUAR model you bought and why?

"Our first self-propelled model was a JAGUAR 70SF. Before this we ran a trailed JAGUAR 60E with an onboard engine," says Alan. "However, after two seasons of running the trailed, it was clear it could not handle our growing workload."

In the summer of 1979 we were offered a demonstration of a 70SF self-propelled by our local CLAAS dealer, GORDONS. It was a completely different experience to driving a trailed machine, but once we got into the manoeuvrability and capacity of a self-propelled, we knew it was the way forward. And the rest is history. Ever since we have just grown and grown."





Why have you stayed with CLAAS?

“The main reason is the great service from GORDONS. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they’re always on hand to help you out. There’s never a problem getting spares and they will work through the night to get you going again if needs be.

CLAAS is the other reason. When we have had issues with the foragers - which there have been a few over 44 years - **CLAAS has never walked away from a problem and is always keen to resolve any issues.** They are also very good at listening to customers and willing to look at ideas and feedback.”

What is your favourite model of JAGUAR you have owned?

“**CLAAS never stops developing its machines and the foragers are always improving,**” says Alan. “My favourite machine so far is our current 850 model. It goes tremendously well and is a pleasure to drive. But I think our newly-ordered 950 will be a step up again - providing greater performance, automation and ease of use. Hopefully, it won’t be unlucky number 13 - or 12B as Martin calls it!”

What are the best features or parts of the machine that are important to you?

“Looking at the evolution of the foragers, **there has been a lot of improvements over the years making them more driver friendly and reliable,**” says Alan. “Auto-lubrication was a great addition - something we’ve had on the last six foragers. Daily maintenance is a lot easier, too, especially with automated shearbar adjustment and knife sharpening. I’m also looking forward to some of the 900 series’ features, such as hydraulic feed roller compression, the ability to swing out the feed rollers, and row-finding auto-steer.”

What are your standout memories of running JAGUAR foragers?

“Going back 20 years, one of my standout memories is when we picked up a large stone and we had a major blow up at about 4 o’clock one afternoon,” says Alan. “We took the forager into GORDONS, I drove to a depot near Edinburgh to pick up the parts, got back to GORDONS for midnight and the forager was back in the field by 9 o’clock the next morning! That just showed to me how parts were easily available and how much GORDONS were prepared to work on the forager to get it going again.”

