

BUSINESS FACTS

McConaghy Contracts
Bushmills, County Antrim



BUSINESS TYPE

Agricultural Contracting



CONTRACTING SERVICES

Full silage operation, slurry application, ploughing, cultivations and crop establishment, grass re-seeding, hedge cutting, fertiliser spreading, excavation and ground works



STAFF

Bob, Robert and Hilary their son Andrew McConaghy plus six full time operators, with up to 10 extra during the busier months

Based on the footsteps of the Giant's Causeway, McConaghy Contracts operates a pair of CLAAS JAGUAR 970s that clear nearly 5,000 hectares of grass silage and wholecrop.

Just like the JAGUAR forager range, the family business has grown and evolved to what it is today.

1990 JAGUAR 690

1994 JAGUAR 860

1997 JAGUAR 860

2001 JAGUAR 900 SPEEDSTAR

2008 JAGUAR 960

2017 JAGUAR 970

2021 JAGUAR 970

1989 JAGUAR 690

1992 JAGUAR MEGA 695

1996 JAGUAR 860

1999 JAGUAR 860

2004 JAGUAR 890

2012 JAGUAR 970

2019 JAGUAR 970

"Myself and my twin brother Silas, convinced our father to buy our first tractor in 1949," recalls Robert 'Bob' McConaghy. "Back then you had to prove to the Department of agriculture that you needed a tractor, and if your land was spread out enough you could have it on rubber rather than steel wheels. Then of course we needed the implements to go behind it which included a square baler which we bought in 1956. At the time bales were a standard length but we fitted a modification that allowed us to make half length bales. We were able to bale green grass and make our first silage bales for us and our neighbours."

The successful family contracting business has continued to grow, moving from bales to a series of trailed single-, double- and precision chop machines and their first self-propelled in 1978. But in 1989 the McConaghy's went to a demonstration of the CLAAS JAGUAR 690 and were impressed by its appetite for big rows of grass.

"My mother asked what did we think, and I told her how it was able to pick up twice as much grass as our current machine," says Robert Junior. "She commented if that was the case it must be a wild pile of money, but my father came in and said he didn't care how much it was, we were going to buy one."

And with that, the demonstration machine was promptly purchased from nearby dealer McElderrys who held the CLAAS franchise.

McCONAGHY

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"Our next 690 had big improvements, the driveshafts had less angles and it had the newer cab," explains Bob. "A MEGA 695 arrived in 1992 with the 24 knife system, it didn't really have enough horsepower and it was inclined to heat if pushed. Trevor Campbell who now works for CLAAS brought out a demo 840 and we went side by side with our 695, but it wasn't any quicker, that is why we went for the JAGUAR 860, we wanted more horsepower."

That first JAGUAR 860 made a massive impression on the McConaghys and stands out as one of the milestone machines that allowed them to clear more acres per day, "It was a completely different animal," notes Robert. Likewise the first 40km/hr transmission in the JAGUAR 900 SPEEDSTAR meant it could keep pace with the tractors and arrive together at the next job, reducing waiting times and upping daily outputs.

There was only one obvious choice when it came to adding a second forager to the business to run alongside their JAGUAR 960, another CLAAS machine, a JAGUAR 890. For over five years now two foragers have tackled the sizeable area with often catchy seasons. They need reliability and the JAGUARS have proved to be just that as has the service from local dealer ERWINS.

Today two JAGUAR 970s are tasked with getting the job done, but which is better, the V8 or the newer straight six?

"The six-cylinder, without a doubt. Earlier this year AR Imagery did a video of both machines working side-by-side," says Robert. "There was a camera in the cab of both machines, and you can hear Andrew Browne in the V8, tell Snowy (David McAllister) to slow down as he just couldn't keep up. The six-cylinder has a good edge on the V8."

The three generations of McConaghys now involved in the business, Bob, Robert and Andrew, agree that the latest pickup is superior to the previous version, the bigger auger taking in any lumps without a flutter and it also floats over the land.

While they have previously harvested maize, wholecrop has proved to be a more reliable crop on the north coast of Antrim. The combine style header used on the early 600 series couldn't meet the appetite of the first generation JAGUAR 800s and the business moved to the DIRECT DISC 600 when it came to the market, but both Bob and Robert nod in agreement that the newest generation header is even better again and is used to directly cut an increasing area of rye as well as wholecrop for the mainly dairy farmer customers.

