

# This Farming Life

First aired in 2016 and with consistent viewing figures of up to 3 million, BBC 2's series 'This Farming Life', which follows the ups and down of farming families throughout Scotland and Northern Ireland, has proved to be perennially popular with an 8th series just commissioned.

Over 12 episodes, each series follows the lives of five farming families through the seasons, with John and Antoinette Imrie being one of those featured in the 7th series screened during 2024.

"We originally applied to be in the 6th series, but were not chosen," says Antoinette, "but then the producers contacted us again about being in the 7th series. Overall it's been a very positive experience; there's hardly been any negativity. It's been great fun to do and the crew are superb. Filming is over nine months and being a livestock farm they have to take us as they find us. We can't guarantee any dramas, and while we would plan filming of seasonal work with them, if something cropped up that might be interesting we would try and let them know, but we have a job to do and will carry on and not wait for them."

"People have been very positive about the series, but the important thing for me is that there is a lot on loneliness in farming. I am active on social media and felt that it was important not only to highlight the issues, but also sometimes people just need a familiar face to reach out to and by appearing on the show, I have had lots of messages from lonely people via Facebook."

## THE NEED TO DIVERSIFY

Farming 180ha just North of Glasgow, the Imrie's run a herd of 75 suckler cattle and 440 breeding ewes, but used the programme to illustrate how they have had to diversify in order to supplement the farm income. Incentivised by their elder daughter's wedding in 2021, the Imrie's and their six children have built up a wedding business, based around a wooden framed 125m<sup>2</sup> Geodome and adjacent sail that can accommodate up to 300 people on a hillside site overlooking Glasgow, which is also the venue for an annual music festival for local young musicians; Byrefest.

Tractor power on the farm comes in the form of a 125hp ARION 510, bought from GORDONS. "In the past we have always run tractors of around 90 to 100hp and they suit this type of farm well, but the biggest problem has been that farm machinery is getting larger and heavier," says John. "Also the weather windows are getting smaller. The days of mowing



silage with a 1.5m mower are gone. We now use a 2.7m mower just to get everything down as quickly as possible and you can't get a small fertiliser spreader any longer.

## A STABLE TRACTOR FOR THE HILLSIDES

"We changed to CLAAS in 2021, because as our machinery got larger, we needed a tractor to match which would also be stable when working on hillsides. All our neighbours around here seem to now run CLAAS tractors, mainly because of Finlay who looks after this area, but also the overall service and back-up from GORDONS is excellent. We helped organise a tractor run last Christmas, and ended up having nearly 100 tractors taking part, but it was very noticeable how many of them were CLAAS!"

"The ARION 510 is obviously strongly built for a reason and is a very good, all round tractor that's very reliable, will do anything but is extremely stable even on our steep ground. It's also exceptionally comfortable – the cab is a very nice spacious place to be over a long day; it's more like being in a car."

