

## **Andrew Turnock**

Andrew works with his parents and brother on the substantial and very modern family farm, near Onecote. He mainly works with the animals on the farm, but also helps his brother Carl with the contracting side of the family business. Sheila Hines interviewed Andrew in November 2017.

SH. Andrew would you like to tell me what you do on the farm?

AT. I do a bit of all sorts really. Starting in the morning, the main job is a bit of scraping out, moving cows around, looking after young stock a bit, corning and haying up and feeding the young stock with a feed wagon. Milk cows have a mix of haylage, blend, brewers grains, minerals, yeast, molasses and silage. I feed them this TMR mix just before breakfast and then again at night. So, bits of all sorts really. Depending on who's helping me, I usually start around about half five, quarter past on a good day. When my cousin Jason's here, he helps me do some jobs, so I don't have to start quite as early if I've had some late nights or whatever. He does a bit of scraping and bedding. We do it all between us, then when Carl comes, he helps to fill the gaps, wherever needs be. We're mostly done for quarter past nine for breakfast. Then when we go out after breakfast, we can get on with something else.

SH. Do you do a lot of contracting?

AT. I don't do as much as Carl. He does a lot of the muckspreading and baling. I mainly drive the chopper, do odd bits of ploughing and things like that. I enjoy driving the chopper, it's sort of my little baby.

SH. What about when its long hours?

AT. I don't mind it. I do get a bit of headache for it, getting back late at night and things. It's made a difference now I've got a wife and child. That's where I get the headaches from a bit, but I just have to try and not be too late. But then it's trying to keep everyone happy at the same time.

SH. Do you manage to find much time to spend with your little girl?

AT. I did go away on holiday this summer for a week. That was nice to see her for a bit. I'm not really a hands-on dad, but I would like to see her more. It's getting house sorted and she keeps going to Mum and Dad's a bit.

SH. Perhaps if you were working together, because your wife comes and helps with sheep a bit doesn't she. Though not this year, as you're both expecting another baby.

AT. Yeah, she's more into sheep than cows. She'll be busy looking after two children soon. Hopefully, she'll get more into cows and help a bit more with those eventually. It's what she's been used to at home, sheep and things. She's from a farming background, about 4 mile away down at Ford, so that helps with her understanding the long hours most of the time.

SH. Are you doing long hours a lot of the year or mainly when you're contracting?

AT. Depends what you're doing. When you're lambing and things, that's stupid hours and same at silaging, you can get quite a few midnight finishes. It seems to catch up with you more this time of year. In the summer it's not too bad when the sun's out, you feel better. It does catch up with you a bit at times, but I enjoy doing it and I think that helps as well.

SH. Is it something as you get a bit older, you'd like to cut back on?

AT. I would probably cut back on the contracting before anything else, but I do enjoy doing it. It gets you away a bit, you see other people and how they do it and its been good. You always think the grass is greener on the other side, but when you get there, you think that field's good, better than ours, but when you've been in it, it's no different really.

SH. And like you say you're meeting other people aren't you, cos when you're stuck at home farming nowadays, you're often working on your own, but then if you're stuck on that machine, unless your farmer comes and gets on with you, you're not actually talking much are you.

AT. We've got CBs in the tractors so you do hear a fair bit of rubbish being spoken throughout the day. You're part of a team and there's banter. That's missing on a lot of farms nowadays. You used to have all your neighbours come and help you hay make but that days gone. There are some good lads, James Belfield, he's nice to talk to, and Dan Shelley. You're always learning something. No, it's all right, and I quite enjoy being part of a team.

SH. Which part of the farming operation up here do you enjoy the most?

AT. I don't know really. I like doing a bit of all sorts. I like being out in the field or the yard. I like feeding cows. I don't mind sheep, but I'd sooner have cows than sheep.

SH. So, I can see you two boys easing back on the sheep operation when you're more in charge.

AT. Perhaps, I'd sooner be a bit more self-sufficient. Like now we've got a lot of winter keep and I'd probably sooner keep a few less so we don't have do as much of that and push cow numbers up a bit.

SH. What threats do you see in farming at the moment?

AT. A lot of uncertainty at the minute. We're on a milk contract, that eases the pressure a bit, unless they change things. Like with the sheep you haven't got that, so there's a bit of uncertainty as with Brexit, sheep job might go a bit harder (because of sheep exports). From what you read in the papers, it does look like that might be the one that suffers a bit, but we don't know really.

SH. I suppose if you've got quite a few strings to your bow up here, then hopefully it will be easier to weather.

AT. Yeah, that's one good thing about contracting alongside farming. I know it's linked to farming but if sheep didn't do so well there's always that.

SH. How do you see yourself in ten year's time?

AT. I'd like to be milking a few more cows. What we do with the sheep as a consequence of that I don't know. There'd probably be a few less. I'd like to push the cows a bit more and try and improve things, keep trying to improve the ground a bit. We've got a new seeder this time to try and get better grass in the pastures and try to improve it.

SH. Are you interested in any environmental stuff.

AT. It's probably good as a whole but it's not something that excites me, I'd sooner improve things. That might change as I get older. When you slow down a bit and get more interested in birds and things, but it doesn't really do anything for me at the minute. For some farmers it does bring another income in I suppose. It's not just about income, it's for the good of everything in the countryside. Perhaps something for the future, maybe. The other day we had a rep come about a heat detection system for the cows and he was saying it's a good system and everything but in the future he was wondering about what it would be like for youngsters, they wouldn't have their own animal husbandry skills with relying on this system to pick up cows in heat or poorly. It's all related to your PC in the house or an App on your phone telling you whether a cow's poorly or needs inseminating.

SH. And he's saying it's sad we're losing these skills which we are, aren't we? Not just those skills, and it is sad, because should they ever be needed again for whatever purpose you've got to start from scratch if they're gone and there's a lot of stuff that'll be gone as you don't get back.

AT. So that's what it might be like for mine and Carl's children if we don't keep pushing some of the old-fashioned ways.

SH. Keep the good. Some of the traditional stuff. Keep the knowledge alive.