

Chairman 2025-2026

Bobby Maitland

My first introduction to NORGRASS came through a phone call from past Chairman, Ronald Barron, a phone call that went like "Hi Bobby, Ronald Barron here I'm needing you to come onto the committee of NORGRASS as I think one day you could be chairman." Fast forward a good few years now and my year of chairing this society is about to end. I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement in the society and found it to be an informative, thought provoking and enjoyable experience - one I would encourage anyone that is asked to get involved in.

A little bit about me, another Robert Maitland some of you might think, and I wouldn't blame you! Someone had to be the unlucky 13th generation and that person is me. An Inverurie lad born and bred, I left school 23 years ago and went to SAC (as it was then) to study Agriculture. I got my HND in Agriculture after two years and completed my degree in Rural Business Management in my third year at Craibstone. I look back on those days as some of the fondest I have had, meeting like-minded people at college and making friendships that last a lifetime. I'm not entirely sure I wouldn't have learned just as much staying at home or working on other farms but back then the social side of Craibstone was one not to be missed and I am glad I spent the three years there. During my time at Craibstone I got the chance of doing a lambing at another past chairman's farm, John and Fiona Gordon at Wellheads. Lambing in general is always hard work and long hours but getting the chance to work on someone else's farm and seeing how they do things differently was an eye opener and one that sticks with me even today. Once finished Craibstone I was lucky enough to have four pals all keen to travel so we went to Australia and New Zealand to do the harvests, unfortunately for us the year we were there was a really bad drought and there was very little harvesting to do, so we completed the harvest in record time and toured both countries before heading home.

Maitland Farms is split predominantly over two farms, West Balhalgardy at Inverurie and Johnston at Leslie, Inch. We have 1300 acre owned and another 300 contract farmed across which we run four different enterprises, with nine staff. The cattle side of the business is mainly concentrated up at Johnston buying in 250 store cattle in the Autumn and trying to get them finished off the grass the following Autumn. We buy in store lambs direct from farmers and crofters in Shetland, which we use to mop up any remaining grass at home and seasonal lets around Aberdeenshire before taking them back onto farm to finish on neeps and our home mixed barley ration. We also have a breed to finish pig unit at Inverurie where we have 380 sows taking all their offspring through to bacon weight. Finally, we have a seed barley business where we sell direct to customers all over Scotland from Orkney down to Campbeltown. The day-to-day management of the farm still relies on myself and Dad and we have a piggery manager who oversees the pig side of the business. We are truly fortunate with the quality of staff that we have and would be lost without them.

My year as chairman has (like every other year as you approach 40) flown past, we started with a stand at Beef Tech, followed up by two very interesting summer visits to Ballindalloch Home

Farm by kind permission of David Johnston, then up the road in the afternoon to see Jim Simmons at Ruthven Farm and finally our Autumn visit to the Marshall Family at Kincaigie Farms. A big thank you to all our host farmers for opening their gates and allowing the society and its members a tour round, I believe one of the main attractions is getting the chance to see how other people are doing things differently to what you do at home.

Finally, a big thank you to all our current committee members for the support throughout the past year and a special thank you to our secretary James Law for keeping me on the right path.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert Marshall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the center of the page.