

## Fletchers' Family Farm Press Pack



***If used, must credit: Fletchers' Family Farm airs on ITV1 on Sunday 15th October 2023 - 11.30am and 7pm on ITVBe.***

### **Can you tell us about Fletchers' Family Farm?**

**Kelvin:** It is a brand new series and coming home! Back to ITV. In many respects, this has been a long time in the making and we have been here at the farm for two years now. We have established a home here. The whole purpose of this programme is to give a real and genuine insight into how life on the farm is. We are considered new entrants to farming, so even though it's been our home for two years, we are still very much the newbies in town. We have never done anything like this before.

We haven't come from farming backgrounds. We have literally taken a leap of faith and done the unthinkable and decided to uproot and move out to the middle of nowhere and start living off the land. As crazy as it sounds, that is exactly what we have done. The only catalyst in that really was I guess to live a simpler life, in the respects of we have our little family, you know what more do we really need?

But then with that and trying to chase a simple life, inevitably it's a huge adventure and it's a step into the unknown. So it's been crazy. It's been the right amount of chaos, the right amount of ups and downs and learning but overall it should feel like a fun, authentic look into how a new life in the country really is.

**Liz:** This a show where you get to see farming from day one, you get to see it from scratch. We are learning with the audience. We ask the simplest questions because we don't know the answer so everyone learns with us.



**Please can you describe the show in three words?**

**Liz:** Honest, fun and emotional.

**Were you excited to welcome the cameras back into the farm?**

**Kelvin:** Yes and it's been seamless. People always say 'does it feel intrusive?' Because you have cameras filming your every moment and yes, naturally as actors it's new territory for us. In the sense of you're very much used to working in the setting of an actor, saying lines, standing where someone else has told you and wearing what someone has designed for you.

But this is absolutely us, what you see is what you get. It's us living our life and in situations that are quite often. New to us so we are out of our comfort zone and we have been brave and foolish enough to allow the cameras in! And that is the beauty of the show, that is what observational documentaries are all about and hopefully that will translate to camera and to the audience.

The show should feel authentic and so real because we haven't consciously tried to do that, it just happened and that is the whole premise of the programme! So with that in mind, it never really feels like it's intrusive. The cameras are there but they are part of the team. They are just capturing you. They have been an amazing team to work with. It is a very intimate setting and you are working together for many months so you almost become family. They see our family dynamic and it is very personal but it was really enjoyable. Weirdly enough, you miss them when they are gone!





**After leaving urban life behind and moving to the country, what do you miss most about Manchester and what do you love about living on the farm?**

**Kelvin:** I was really happy where we were but there's nothing I miss that I don't have; well except I think the only thing is Mum and Dad coming around for a Brew because they lived five minutes away. The thing I love is days like today, the sounds of the birds and all the noises. It's the stillness, no other place has made me feel quite as present as this place does and that's the ability it has. It is the stand still ability that allows you to capture that moment and that's so rare for everyone because we are all so busy. Busy lives, busy careers and constantly looking forward, being ambitious and planning. But that is one thing, it offers that solace and I think that is absolutely crucial especially with a young growing family, because these moments will soon be over. The kids are growing up and I know that we will always want to look back and cherish and recapture these moments so it is key that we remain present.

**Liz:** Yes, I think friends and family because we don't live so close to them anymore They are the people we miss. But we make big efforts to see them, they come and they will have a huge day on the farm. So we do miss them coming around everyday but we do still have days getting everyone together when we can.

It's also the excitement, everyday it is down to us to create what we do on the farm and what we do with this space and I think that is one of the best things. We get the chance to look around and think right, what's next? Where do we go from here? We can start with one thing and completely change it the next day. Everyday is different, there has not been a single day that has been the same.



**What advice would you give to anyone interested in farming and to any first-generation farmers?**

**Kelvin:** Be bold, be brave and do your research. That's it really. I think you really have to embrace those big changes and big steps. It can be quite daunting. But I always say everything starts with a thought.

You just have to put the wheels in motion really, I think that this is key. Naturally, you have to have an understanding of what you are walking into and there's a lot to consider. Whether you just want to move away from the city and to the country and start with a little bit of land. You have to consider how you are going to acquire that land, there are a whole host of things you have to read up on. Then you also have to decide how you are going to farm. There is a whole lot to consider! It is overwhelming, but little steps, endeavour, bags of enthusiasm and determination then it is absolutely possible and hopefully we prove that.

**Liz:** You learn on the job, there is a lot of research you can do but there is so much you have to learn and the more you learn, the more you realise, you know absolutely nothing. We have always started off with a small flock of Sheep or a small amount of animals, so we can learn around that and then when you expand, you have the experience behind you. I think that talking to other farmers and going to as many markets as you can is important. Because everyone has their own way. And eventually you find your way of doing things, so it's just about getting in there, getting involved in the community, speaking to people and learning from experience.

**Kelvin:** I always feel so much richer when I have gained knowledge. It is so fulfilling and it gives you such confidence, drive and reassurance. It is one of the most necessary ingredients of life. The more knowledge you can acquire the better. I feel so much better for the knowledge that I have acquired and everything I have learnt so far.



I just find it fascinating and I genuinely believe that even people that aren't living the same way as us will find it just as interesting. It can still be so engaging and relatable and I do think inherently as humans we all have that nomad nature, we all want to roam free and live off the land, it goes back to our roots. Gaining that wealth of knowledge is never ending.



### **How did you meet other members of the farming community?**

**Kelvin:** The community has been absolutely incredible, they are so welcoming. They are old school but open minded. In many respects, stuck in their ways but yet they are the most open minded and accepting people I have ever met. It was so refreshing for two newbies who are Actors and have a camera following them.

For them to still be so welcoming, I have never really felt like I don't belong here. And I know that isn't just for me, that would be for anybody! Regardless of age, gender, race or background. We aren't getting special treatment in any way. Although sometimes there is that assumption you are already up to speed even as a new entrant so sometimes, we do need to get things explained to us in layman's terms.

**Liz:** I think they all know what you are going through from a family of generational farmers or you are starting from day one. We are in it and they know the highs and lows we are going through and we recognise what they are going through.

People always stop us and say we love what you are doing and they can see the passion and we get genuine support from them and that really takes our breath away sometimes. You know someone's family may have been in farming for hundreds of years and they've just said they love what we are doing, that is a great moment and feeling to have. It is so special.

### **Can you tell us about some of the highs and lows of farming?**

**Kelvin:** We opened up our farm to the public for the first time and that was an amazing experience. We got to meet so many people and realise how much of a connection we have had. Another great moment was that we lambed and birthed for the first time. The kids Lambed and we had our first Pigs born. We made Hay for the first time, me and Liz did the whole process together.

We have had so many big achievements in the farming calendar. Those high moments don't feel as high without the lows. Without the loss of livestock, losing a Sheep or losing a Lamb and at times, you do feel like you have made a mistake but that is inevitable with new farmers. There have been plenty of highs and lows and the cameras capture them all.

**Liz:** Yes, we even had farmers coming to our farm when we opened it to the public which was amazing! There were so many great moments during the show. The lows are what you learn from and they are what keeps us going.

### **You spent many years playing farmer Andy Sugden in Emmerdale, how have you put those skills into action in real life and does doing this show feel a bit like coming full circle?**

**Kelvin:** Not really, as I was acting so there aren't really any transferable skills in essence really. There's no way, I am allowing people to think he played a farmer for twenty years, he must be alright at farming! But yes, the irony is I played a farmer and now I have become a farmer. If you had told me, when I was in Emmerdale, that I would eventually be a Farmer myself, I probably would have looked at you a bit strange.

At the time when I was saying those lines, I didn't completely understand them but now I am doing things I talked about back then! Maybe I would have played that part better now that I actually have experience. I can't imagine myself or my family doing anything else. Farming is a part of my DNA now.





**Can you tell us about a funny moment that happened whilst filming?**

**Kelvin:** All the funny moments involve the kids but there was a funny moment when we were Al'ing the Pigs. It was a bit graphic as we had never done it before. The funny moments are always when things go wrong. You always have to expect the unexpected and that is rule number one when you are living on a farm.

**Liz:** Yes I don't know if that was funny at the time but looking back now, you just think what were we doing. Kelvin is such a perfectionist, he has to have practised everything before he has done it. But I like to get in there and just wing it and Kelvin literally rehearses the movements.





### What is it like navigating farming life with small children?

**Liz:** Very tricky! They test your patience. They can be an absolute help or an absolute handful. You never know what you are going to get. Marnie is our secret weapon actually. She is such a strong girl. When we are herding Sheep, she is our secret weapon. She can sort any problem out. Milo is off the job within five minutes sometimes!





**Kelvin:** We sack Milo within five minutes! He gets the sack straight away, he unsettles everyone else and he ends up messing about and Marnie gets an immediate promotion. She is brave, intelligent and feisty. Two years ago, they had never been on a farm and now it's like they have always lived here. But kids do that anyway, they always take everything in their stride. They are so amazing. The twins are just over one, I'd probably sack them as well. They are no help yet! I'd have Marnie and Liz in my team but the twins and Milo are going to have to come back in a few years.

**On the farm, you are both pretty hands-on. Are there any tasks either of you refuse to do?**

**Liz:** I'd love to be able to refuse jobs, but you just can't. We have to work together! We have two hundred sheep surrounding us and we have to just get through and be strong together and you can't be turning your nose up at any job.

You have to be prepared to do them all. Weirdly the dirtiest jobs, Kelvin does the disappearing act and I end up doing them and Kelvin ends up doing something else.

**Kelvin:** I don't think there are jobs that one person is better suited at. Mucking out, tractor driving, feeding the animals, we both do together. Nine out of ten jobs on the farm, we both do! Which I guess in many ways, shows anyone can do it.

**What do you both like to do for down time?**

**Kelvin:** Sleep! We rarely get any and that's not because we are farmers, it is because we are parents. It can be hard as kids are very demanding. So they are quite rare, those moments but when we do get them, you realise how important and impactful they are and you always say we should do this more often. It is nice to connect as two adults and as Kelvin and Liz as well, not just Mummy and Daddy, that is crucial to the whole family dynamic. Those moments we have when we just ask each other how your day is going are special. They aren't date nights but those are the moments we class as date nights.

**Liz:** We went to Wales, a couple of weeks ago and just being outside with the kids and going to the beach was extremely special. We love moments like that where we all just laugh together. They are our favourite moments.

**What do you think your biggest challenge has been on the farm so far?**

**Kelvin:** Time management as there is always so much to do and there aren't enough hours in the day, it's all about prioritising.

**Liz:** It's no 9-5, it's literally round the clock.

**What is your biggest achievement so far on the farm?**

**Liz:** Lambing is a huge event and achievement. We have gone from no Sheep, to ten Sheep to now over two hundred Sheep. We now have thirty Pigs and we have gone from nothing to this.

**Kelvin:** I do struggle to pick one. I really appreciate them all and I am really proud of us and of what we were doing and what we are building. But I'd say my biggest achievement is always going to be my family and I am always looking forward!

**What made you decide to open the farm to the public and was it a hard decision to make?**

**Kelvin:** We felt that so many people were on this journey with us and felt invested in our journey and we felt that was a natural step to take. It was a really nice opportunity for us to meet these people. We loved it so much, we have decided to open it up this Christmas.

**What plans do you have for the farm in the future? Will there be any more new additions?**



**Kelvin:** Yes, we have a lot going on. New animals and new breeds. The farm is ever evolving. We are looking into doing some Arable farming. We are just scratching the surface, what we are going to be doing in six months time, who knows what the future holds? That sense of variety will always be there.

**Liz:** We just want to keep expanding, evolving and learning more.

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**Press contacts:**

Naomi.Bharwani@itv.com  
Amanda@exclusivepressandpublicity.com

**Picture contact:**

James.Hilder@itv.com