

# KEY GETS A BIG TICK FOR FLEXIBILITY



Agriculture  
Automotive  
Eco-technology  
Property



John Ibbett - CEO of The Bedfordia Group

The Bedfordia Group based in Milton Ernest was started in the 1930's. The original business was in property and farming. Today Bedfordia is owned and managed by the founding Ibbett family, John Ibbett is the Group CEO, and employs more than 300 people across four divisions – Agriculture, Automotive, Eco-Technology and Property.

Bedfordia farms more than 2,200 ha focussing on arable, mainly wheat and oil seed rape, and the supply of 23,000 pigs p.a. to major supermarkets and a regional meat retailer. Pig slurry and food chain waste is transformed into two valuable products; a bio-fertiliser and a methane bio-gas used to generate electricity using Anaerobic Digestion (AD). There are 9 AD plants in the UK today licensed to take food waste including animal by products. Three of these belong to BiogenGreenfinch – the Eco-technology arm of Bedfordia.

Landmark is IT supplier for three out of the four Bedfordia Group trading sectors Agriculture, Eco-Technology and Property. Nigel Parsons,

MD of Landmark, says: "Landmark KEY Advanced Accounts and KEY Property help Bedfordia to 'embrace change and innovation' and 'adopt an organised approach to working efficiently and effectively', both stated ideals of the company.

## How did the Bedfordia/Landmark relationship start?

Nine years ago Bedfordia Farms was looking to update its accounts from a DOS based system. It was a significant benefit that KEY Accounts linked to Amais crop recording software and that the Group's accountants, Deloitte, were already using KEY. The Landmark demonstration impressed John Ibbett and John Warner, The Group's Financial Controller. Maybe they had found a tool which could deliver good management information for a growing multi-enterprise business with the scope for detailed budgeting? John Warner says: "As Landmark is easy to use and very flexible we have been able to utilise it across a variety of our businesses."

Ian Smith, MD of Bedfordia Farms relies on Viv Wilkinson, Farms Accountant, to provide him with financial reports. "Viv amalgamates all the figures but at budgeting time she exports the reports to Excel and emails them on to me. There is rarely any information that we cannot find without enough detail," Ian explains. Viv has been working with figures for 35 years and is a fan of the KEY software: "It is the most efficient accounting system I've ever worked on," she adds.

## How did KEY become the chosen accounting tool for Biogen Greenfinch?

John Ibbett explains: "In 2002 we either had to invest in pig production and management of waste or get out of pigs; the slurry was more of a dilemma than a resource. Disposing of 12,500m<sup>3</sup> of pig slurry is a BIG dilemma."

After extensive research, much of which was in Germany, Bedfordia formed Biogen (UK) Ltd in 2005 and since KEY Advanced

## GETTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER

### Make the most of your software investment

Nigel Parsons, MD of Landmark

We are all heartily sick of hearing about the forthcoming, and current spending cuts, and how these will affect our business and personal lives. What about the changes closer to home in our industry?

We continue to gain from the lowest base rate for years, grain prices have increased by 30%, the milk price is increasing and the weak currency market has benefited all recipients of the single farm payment. But is it all sustainable?

The answer is NO, but there is little we as individuals can do to affect the future of SFP after 2012. However, we can ensure that our own businesses are in order to cope with the future cuts and current volatility within the agricultural sector; and keeping the bank happy is, I would suggest, top of the list. Historically agriculture has been viewed as a safe lending area for banks, but can this be relied upon? Lending by UK banks to British companies fell by £30 billion from May 2009 to May 2010, despite huge government pressure to increase lending, especially to small businesses. Farm incomes have fluctuated due to cereal prices realised and timing of input purchases creating dramatic swings in cashflow. Where the borrowing is backed by land as the asset, there is less concern, but some of the UK banks are lacking their former enthusiasm for lending to UK agriculture.

We continue to develop, refine and support software to assist you in planning, budgeting and monitoring your business. If you are not making the most of your software, then training is an option and our team is here to help.

We are running 17 group training courses and 600+ one to one on-site training days this year. We answer approximately 10,000 support calls per annum and provide web based support and training. We believe you will require quality management information to weather the forthcoming changes: if you would like help, please call.

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was performing well for the farming side of the business it was decided to use it for the Biogen accounts, and it adapted well. Biogen needed more processing sites to take advantage of the enormous opportunities in the UK as John explains: "With 21 million tonnes of food waste and only 7 or 8 million tonnes of this going to AD the potential for growth is obvious. In the design stage of a second processing plant I came across the MD of Greenfinch, Michael Chesshire. His expertise and our shared interest in the benefits of eco-technology led to a merger in 2008 – BiogenGreenfinch was born."

The data migration from Sage to KEY was scheduled mid-financial year in May 2010. BiogenGreenfinch staff worked closely with Crispin Rocholl, Development Director of Landmark who oversaw the installation, set up advice, and on-site support for thousands of transactions to ensure a smooth transition including meticulous backdating to January. John Ibbett comments: "Everyone says the accounting is vastly better under one system and we are hoping that KEY Prime Accounts will have the scale to manage the next stage of more AD processing plants – so far KEY gets a big tick for flexibility."

provides vital synergy and structure," he says. "Even so I cannot see how you can get rid of all the paper linked to property; it has historical and legal importance but I dream of linking the archives, email trails and mapping with KEY Property one day!"

**In the meantime the Landmark team continues to enjoy supporting Bedfordia because of its size, its multi-divisional structure and the way it likes to do business which requires the best management information available to it.**

As with any merger one of the challenges faced by management was what to do about two companies running separate accounts systems. Greenfinch was using Sage Line 50. Running two systems and pulling the accounts together was becoming less feasible as the business grew. "We looked at both systems and we felt more comfortable with the robustness and flexibility of the KEY product," says John Warner.

### What of the future?

John dreams of a paperless office but questions the practicality especially on the property management side: "There are complications with deeds and documents for over 200 properties. The day to day management of the residential side of Bedfordia is done by local agents Robinson Hall, also KEY users, and the swapping of information via KEY Property



Food waste collection in Bedfordshire

## LANDMARK TECHNOLOGY ON TEST



Richard Ledger & James Lutener, Landmark's Training Manager

**KEY Prime is the next generation of Accounts and Property software being developed by Landmark to encompass modern technology within our development cycle.**

"Our aim in gradually developing the KEY Prime range is to re-create the ease of use, flexibility and power of reporting within a new operating system and shell," says Managing Director, Nigel Parsons. "Add to that some additional functionality for some of our larger more demanding businesses and we believe that we have invested wisely for the future of rural business software."

"Nevertheless, 'workshop testing' is fine, but it is when the software is out live on-site that the moment of truth is revealed," Nigel Parsons continues.

KEY Prime is currently being used on over 15 sites, in a wide range of business sizes, types and demands. Richard Ledger, farming in East Kent, is one of the early adopters.

He says: "We were upgrading our hardware, and it seemed that if there was a new product to try, we should be involved at an early stage. We are always testing prototype combines so why not software?!"

**"Feedback from Richard Ledger has been invaluable to us," comments Nigel Parsons. "He is a 'hands-on' farmer, and relies on the output from his software. However, his farming business has gone from 600 acres to 3,500 acres, and therefore time in the office needs to be productive and relevant."**

Richard sums up his experience by saying: "We have got on really well with KEY Prime; we were set up by James Lutener, and ran our accounts in tandem for 3 months. I'm sure we made a few mistakes, but I have found some features in the new software which I really like, especially the improved drill down and editing. Obviously, it takes a bit of getting used to, but the support has been excellent. Most importantly I am delighted that Landmark is investing in the future so that we can concentrate on farming in the knowledge that our software is being constantly updated."



## SLEEP TIGHT YOUR DATA IS SAFE

For real peace of mind Landmark has launched a new simple online Data Backup Service for £12/month for up to 5GB of encrypted data.

This Backup Service works from a piece of software loaded onto your pc which allows you to schedule automatic backup off-site through a third party.

A Landmark client who recently lost data says: "It cost me over £2000 for a data restore service and extra secretarial time; it was a very stressful experience. We were backing up regularly, and I thought effectively, but I now recognise that with so much of my business on a PC it makes sense to have it professionally stored off-site."

Matthew Bray, Landmark's Technical Support Manager, is impressed: "The data is stored on a staged backup system for a rolling 30 days in the UK. Only you can retrieve data which can be restored to any machine with Windows XP and broadband."



# A DECADE OF DIVERSIFICATION

M & R BAZELEY - using KEY software to link Arable and Dairy Farming with Real Ale and Barn Storage



Martin Bazeley sells his Suthwyk Ale

**This two generation farming family took out an initial 110 acre tenancy in 1952. Roger, one of two brothers recalls: "We had 3 in-calf heifers, no computers and we worked on the Micawber Principle of accounting 'Something will turn up!'"**

Martin, Roger's son now runs the business, ably assisted by his sister Jane. "I adopted computerisation by installing FCG software in 2000. By 2008 we were struggling with the limitations of old technology and I was looking for improved management information across our range of very varied businesses. I knew about Landmark from our accountant, Chris Monnington, who encouraged us to make the move."

Jane joined Martin as an employee in 2003, the year that Barn Store (business number four) was launched, and with an IBM systems background she was a real asset. "I received invaluable help from the Self-Storage Association with standard legal documents," she says.

Since 2008 the diversified business has been run on KEY Accounts supported by Landmark's Accounts Consultant, Mark Thatcher. Jane says: "We set up all four companies with Mark, which involved identifying new code structures, making good use of the enterprise facility and of course adding customers and suppliers."

"KEY was new to me, so Mark took me through the basic operations in his first visit, then came back to help tidy up the mistakes after the first month! Obviously, it was all a bit daunting at first, but I was cushioned by the training from Mark and the availability of the support line which kept me on the straight and narrow in between visits."

Now full use is being made of the KEY electronic banking module and Sales Invoicer. KEY Accounts is flexible enough for all the day to day transfers that occur between businesses on a fully diversified farm. "Gone are the days when as a farmer I had to speak to a couple of grain traders and the MMB in a day – we have hundreds of customers and a lot of 'admin'. Jane is brilliant at it all," adds Martin!

## How has the company diversified?

The original M & R Bazeley farming company is a tenant on 920 acres of the Southwick Estate, just off the M27 at Fareham. It has within it two main enterprises – a 220 cow dairy herd (Hipleys) and an arable farm (Portsmouth). These enterprises have slightly different year ends to the other businesses and they are contracted out, so year end is complicated. Jane appreciates Mark Thatcher's Field Service support involving a day to sort out transfers, VAT and Journals between contractors and the farm.

The last decade has seen many changes for the Bazeleys who were hitherto traditionally farming. In 2000, looking for diversification, Martin explored the possibility of bottling water at Offwell Farm from the natural spring. He explains: "When this fell through because of a technicality with the licensing agreement it set me thinking about what other assets I had and we thought 'we have chimney pots' and we have light chalk which is some of the best malting barley land in the country. We began in a small way and have grown organically. A small micro-brewery takes our malted barley and now brews a range of 2,500 pints of Suthwyk Ales per week which we store, sell and deliver in bottles and casks to pubs, private individuals, brasseries and the Southern Co-Op. We even supply Tate Modern," he says.

A Real Ale shop followed in 2003 with the renovation of a Victorian steam brewery, which had survived the war until 1957, even supplying beer to Eisenhower and 'Monty' who were planning Operation Overlord, the D-Day Offensive, at nearby Southwick House. Southwick Brewhouse stocks 175 different beers and ciders, gifts and cheese and is run in partnership with an ex-publican.

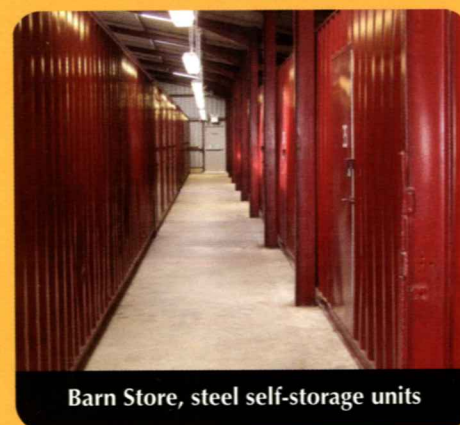
The initial idea for Barn Store was to kit out an ex-dairy building with 20' containers for

self storage. Martin says: "Again we looked at our assets, and redundant buildings near to a City with motorway access shouted 'storage', but with a difference. We provide exclusive use of space, with unrestricted access, in a family run caring environment."

"We are on hand to support customers without touching their belongings; most people need storage at difficult times in their lives and clean, dry, steel self-storage units of different sizes with CCTV security and the peace of mind that we live on-site is worth marketing." Jane laughs as she recalls fondly her customer who brought home made fruit cake with his rent every month! "That was definitely not on the Landmark Sales Invoicer Program," she says.

The Bazeleys are actively looking for more franchisees for Barn Store, there are already five sites, and the website [www.barn-store.co.uk](http://www.barn-store.co.uk) provides more information to any interested farmers.

**In the meantime Landmark technology continues to support this growing diversified business, and waits with interest for the next new venture on which to test KEY Accounts...**



Barn Store, steel self-storage units



Landmark's social event was a day in Brighton followed by an evening of Greyhound Racing



# LANDMARK WEBSITE

The re-designed Landmark website has been live for 9 months now. As well as providing in-depth details of Landmark's products and services, details of shows we are attending and training courses it also provides existing users with additional support for the KEY software range 24/7.

So when you are working outside the telephone helpline operating hours visit the Support pages to find answers to your questions. Help includes aspects of the KEY software e.g. entering the purchase of a fixed asset, dealing with a bounced cheque or general computing advice such as backing up data.

## KEY MARK IS NEW AND IT IS FREE!

Starting off with new software is challenging, nobody likes change, but Landmark has introduced KEY Mark an assurance service to give you a helping hand to get the most out of your software.

After about 3 months you will be used to the functions, icons and layout of your software. You might have had initial training or used the telephone support service – but is there room for improvement?

**KEY Mark is a new and unique service from the Landmark team designed to help you to review your data and to identify early any loopholes in how you use your accounting software.**

### How does KEY Mark work?

A member of the support team will contact you and arrange for you to email a backup of your data between 3 and 6 months after purchase.

A written or verbal report will follow which will check that the basic bookkeeping routines are being run correctly, the

standard procedures are in place, and that your reports are meaningful.

Sarah Wilkins AIAGSA, farm secretary, has recently used KEY Mark for one of her clients: "I think that it is a fantastic idea," she says. "I use Landmark for as many of my clients as possible and this is just another way in which they are streets ahead of the competition. It is really good to show the clients and their accountants what KEY can do – I shall be encouraging every client of mine to use KEY Mark."



## NEW HORIZONS FOR WINTER WORKSHOPS

These popular winter group courses for Landmark clients mean that Mary Collis, Training Director, and James Lutener, Training Manager, travel the UK talking to users about the latest versions of the KEY Accounts and KEY Property software.

The 17 courses cover all the latest new features in the programs followed by some specific topics and a Question and Solution session. This year's topics are Fraud in the Office (Accounts) and Tenancy Reviews (Property).

Jean Maskell travelled from Argyll to Edinburgh with her assistant last year on behalf of Ardkinglas Estate. She says:

"It was well worth it. We liked the clear explanation, we also took on board some hints from other people, and we met up with our accountants who we did not know would be there!"

Mary Collis enjoys meeting clients in a group format during the training sessions: "We can share with clients all the latest news on product development and new services and during the open discussion sessions we can advise on more efficient ways of working, offer solutions and pass on client feedback to everyone at the Landmark Office."



Website support example

Either type a question into the search box at the top of the Support page or visit the Support Index Page to view an alphabetical list of Help topics.

The Support pages are reviewed and updated regularly so if your question wasn't answered the first time it may have been addressed subsequently.



Do you have a question? Enter your query above to search for possible solutions or visit the [Support Index Page](#) to view an alphabetical list of Help

**If you would like a link to your company website direct from ours then please email Helena Hanson at [helena.hanson@landmarksystems.co.uk](mailto:helena.hanson@landmarksystems.co.uk).**

**We would obviously like a reciprocal link from you! Please add the URL [www.landmarksystems.co.uk](http://www.landmarksystems.co.uk) to your site, or if you would like to talk to Helena first then call her on 01798 877100.**