

Case Study



C.E Holt and Partners

Droke and Manor Farms



KEYPrime
Accounts User

John Holt, Farmer

The Holt family has been trading under the same name for more than 75 years. I am the third generation tenant farmer at Droke and Manor farms, farming over 900 acres in partnership with my wife Janet. The farm employs my daughter Johanna and son Harry as well as a tractor driver and two herds-people. We also use contractors throughout the year for various field work.

In 2000 we were looking to diversify and a chance visit to a mountain boarding stand at the Royal Show inspired me to start our own mountain boarding centre here in the South Downs. It was an exciting, high growth sport and the centre quickly grew into a highly organised enterprise employing a centre manager and 15 part time staff including instructors, tractor driver and shop assistants. We had our own equipment shop and catering operation and welcomed groups of up to 50 people at a time including scouts and girl guides, birthday parties, stag and hen groups and individuals. We also hosted numerous National and International mountain boarding events.

In 2012 after a difficult few years including appalling weather, the economic downturn, competition from other more popular sports such as football and rugby and the lack of growth in mountain boarding as a whole, we took the difficult decision to close the centre.



It had always been a money making diversification of the farm and so when it became clear that this was no longer the case it was time to call it a day.

We have decided to focus on the production of food, something we are very good at. Therefore the growth, success and efficiency of the dairy is paramount. Johanna's role has moved from running the mountain boarding to investigating other diversification options particularly adding value to farm products (i.e. beef and milk), as well as hosting farm visits as part of our HLS scheme.



C.E Holt and Partners, Droke and Manor Farms

We have used KEY Accounts for about 20 years and upgraded to KEYPrime Accounts in February 2014. I like to keep farm recording simple and the inputting and reports are allocated to 4 cost centres only. Namely the 600 acres of combinable crops, a 230 dairy cowherd, store beef and a 400 head flock of store lambs.



The software that we use is KEYPrime Accounts, Gatekeeper and Interherd. I used to struggle with the stock control of the old system but now I do the general spray, fertiliser and chemical management on KEYPrime and the detail in Gatekeeper - it works well. It is important that every enterprise is profitable and efficient and KEYPrime Accounts enables us to measure this accurately and with minimum effort.



In the office we run a no frills system operated by myself and Johanna. Johanna does the inputting and payments twice a month. In the eighties we struggled with a DOS system on an Apple computer and in hindsight I would not have bothered before the technology improved.

We use Landmark's support line occasionally, the updates arrive regularly and we always have a year-end visit to tidy up any loose ends.



What I like about KEYPrime Accounts is the accurate cost allocation it allows me to make. I know that the information is there and how my enterprises are performing, it was with this information that we were able to re-structure our business to look at the bottom line and to accommodate the skill set of the next generation!



My advice to anyone with a good idea for diversifying is to thoroughly research your product or service offering, particularly your market, costs and potential profitability.

