



THE KEYPRIME RANGE: USED BY THE BEST

Edward Vipond, Farmers Weekly Farm Manager
of the Year & Farmer of the Year 2021

“I was pleased to hear that I had won the Farmers Weekly Farm Manager of Year title, but shocked to discover that I had also won the competition overall as Farmers Weekly Farmer of the Year,” explained Edward Vipond of Troston Farms near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk....



Since October 2021 when he won the awards, former Nuffield Scholar Edward has been kept busy with speaking engagements as well as the management of the farm business. Both he and bookkeeper Kati Turner kindly took an hour from their schedules to tell Landmark a little bit more about Edward's award-winning approach, and how KEYPrime Accounts & KEYPrime Property assist them both.

One member of staff remains from the original team as Edward has introduced completely new ways of working. He is happy with the team he has now who share his attention to detail, a skill picked up from 14 years working for Velcourt.

Edward is grateful to the farm's owner who has told him to "treat the farm as his own" – autonomy is very important to him and it is this that allows him to make the decisions he does.

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

- Troston Farms is a 1452ha arable business, expanded in recent years and made up of four owned farms stretching from Stanton to Risby along the A14.
- Crops grown are milling and feed wheat, malting and feed barley, milling and feed rye, spring beans, sunflowers and maize.
- Both Edward Vipond and Kati Turner joined the business in 2015.
- The business is also supported by Andersons Farm Business Consultants.

OR A SENTIMENTAL APPROACH...

Edward's approach to cropping is neither guided by sentiment nor the rotation. As the number of testing weather events increases, the question he asks is "what are the risks of it going wrong?".

Edward is quite clear: "because we have always done it this way' is not enough reason to grow something anymore. Climate and cost risks have seen oilseed rape, sugar beet and forage rye replaced by lower risk sunflowers and milling rye on lighter land. The 40ha of sunflowers have 10% of the costs of sugar beet and in a dry year, we'd spend even more on sugar beet," he explained.

NOT AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES...

When asked what had changed in the business since he took on the manager role, Edward simply replied: "Well, what hasn't?" Over the course of the last six and a half years, he has replaced every piece of machinery, moving away from hire to hire purchase agreements with extended warranties.



Troston Farms use Landmark's KEYPrime Accounts and
KEYPrime Property software

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Edward has replaced riskier crops with sunflowers recently.

RESULTING PERFORMANCE

Yields have increased as a result of Edward's changes, attention to detail and risk management skills.

Over the last five years, rye yields are up 50% and wheat yields are up 20%. Spring barley yields equal those in the top 10% in the country.

Cost benchmarking figures back up the business's performance as winter wheat, spring barley and sugar beet direct costs are very nearly in the top 10% of all UK farms.

HOW DOES KEYPRIME HELP?

Kati is responsible for data entry in KEYPrime Accounts and KEYPrime Property, while Edward concentrates on the reporting functions.

Enterprise wise, Kati keeps things relatively simple, using three main codes to split transactions between the farm, the estate and the residential properties. However, she does use the Analysis code function thoroughly and this allows her to allocate transactions to every piece of machinery and property.

Kati is also accurate in her entering of all quantities bought and sold in the system. She commented that she does look after the books for a couple of other businesses, using another accounts package and does not find it as straightforward. In fact, Kati finds that even though the Landmark team is very helpful, she very rarely needs to make use of the telephone support line.

Edward concurred with Kati on KEYPrime's ease of use: "I don't find it onerous. Yes, I only use it for reporting, I've never had to have any formal training for what I use it for."

Edward mainly uses KEYPrime's cashflow reporting options, as these are presented to the farm's owners and directors monthly.

"The budget is created every October in MS Excel and imported into KEYPrime," explained Edward. This allows him to report on cashflow against budget, irrespective of harvest year. Kati agrees that one of her favourite functions is still the ability to drill down to individual transaction level on almost any report.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

"The farm's owner is farming oriented, therefore diversification is not a priority, though this may have to change with the regression of BPS. Making profit without the scheme will not be straightforward and could be wiped in any year by a single weather event." Edward cited the years 2017 and 2018 – in 2017 his average maize yield was 62t but a lack of rain in 2018 saw this plummet to just 22t!

Edward is waiting to hear back on two new stewardship schemes and has one Countryside Stewardship Scheme ending at the end of the year – renewal is in discussion. Edward is not particularly excited by the Sustainable Farming Incentive and feels that it is weighted towards no till farming.

Unlike many farming businesses, the farm's owners are looking to streamline its property portfolio rather than grow it. When Edward joined the business there were 30 properties, now there are just over 20. The rental income and repair management for these properties is carefully managed by Kati using Landmark's KEYPrime Property software.

"Going forward, the aim will be to achieve profit without government support. The arable business may well expand in the future but could also look very different with more land remaining uncropped."

The extraordinary decision of "to crop or not to crop" is one now facing many farmers – having the right information in an accessible format to guide this is now more important than ever.



Bookkeeper Kati using KEYPrime Accounts software.



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HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
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