

Rather the devil you know..... but what about the devil you don't?



Let's face it most of us are filled with horror at the thought of changing computer program particularly when it involves valuable records built up over the years in business accounts. You don't have to take our word for it, we asked 4 clients to explain their experiences of upgrading onto Landmark KEY accounts.

J.T. & J.H. Mills

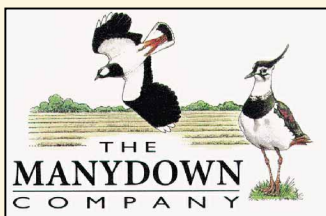
Anne Shuttleworth assists Peter Mills in running the office for a 750 acre dairy and arable farm in Hampshire. In addition a new share farming agreement has released grain storage areas for possible conversion.

A new Windows™ version of HNL accounts seemed poised to replace the 15 year old DOS system. The Windows™ program had no bearing on agriculture or a small company, it was too involved and it could not cope with NatWest Autopay," says Anne. "We decided to stick with our old DOS version until we saw a demonstration of KEY accounts and were impressed enough to make the jump."

The transfer of data was very smooth and done by e-mail between Anne and Landmark, so that before training began accounting data was backdated onto KEY. "This was a major benefit," continues Anne. "I had set up traders and put on current invoices before Mary Collis arrived, which was why I was able to get the most out of the training day."

The farm accountants, Martin & Co., are running KEY. "We have yet to see the full benefit of the reporting facility and the ease of data transfer between offices at year end, but judging by my use of it so far I am not expecting any problems, it has all been very straightforward," concludes Anne.

The Manydown Company



The Manydown Company is a 5,000 acre family owned estate based around Wootton St Lawrence, near Basingstoke. The Company's in-hand farming interests (3000 acres) comprises of combinable crops and substantial livestock enterprises – single suckled

beef, sheep and poultry, all marketed through the farm shop. The Company also has a large let property portfolio – commercial and residential, maintained by its building maintenance team.

Laura Clark and Mary Lipscombe run the accounting software, which was upgraded to KEY Accounts with KEY Property in April. Laura joined in March and comments on the HNL predecessor to KEY: "It was a reasonably good system for management reporting, but was lacking in ease of general day to day usage. The data entry was quite involved and the software was difficult to read. Also, at the time this software was DOS based."

"As the company was growing it was decided that a new software system would be implemented at the beginning of the new financial year. Several systems, both farming and business orientated, were assessed with particular emphasis on ease of data entry, readable reporting and an integrated link to a rental package. Another requirement was that we could export information into spreadsheets, to enable us to write exclusive reports. With all these points in mind Landmark's system came out on top."

Laura and Mary received several training sessions from Jenny Livingston whom they describe as 'extremely good'. "Whatever problems we have encountered have been dealt with quickly and efficiently," says Laura.

The Redsell Group

Tony Redsell runs 3,000 acres of arable land in Kent. Crops grown range from fruit and vegetables to cereals, herbage seeds and hops. In addition Farming World is an imaginative leisure attraction. This diverse business requires three managers who need good well laid out information and support from their office IT system.

Tony remembers the lengthy pen and pencil days and then the introduction of a DOS based programme, which although inflexible, made a huge difference to Ann Martin and Katrina Devonport who run the office. Tony says: "About 4 years ago our consultants recommended that we upgrade onto the Windows™ based version of our Farmplan accounts program and then the fun started! The work was never completed and we lost faith in it, it was so multi-dimensional that it never produced the same report twice."

Eventually, on recommendation of an existing user and Reeves & Neylan, Redsell's accountants, Landmark put KEY

software into the business. Ann is complimentary after 3 years on the system.

"It has clear reporting and it has made my life a lot easier," she says. "I purely use it for the accounts but the managers receive consistent reports. Before year end we can transfer information between Landmark, ourselves and the accountant so when we meet we are all looking at the same reports. I especially like not having to hang back before starting the next year's accounts."

White Post Farm

Paul Kuck manages 1100 acres for owner John Clark who grows cereals and vegetables in Nottinghamshire. Paul is familiar with a few software programs, including Sage which was in use at White Post. He compares Landmark KEY accounts favourably: "I am very impressed with KEY, it is user-friendly and farm orientated," he says. Paul particularly enthuses about the newest 'drill down' facility known as Investigator, which means that he can quickly find solutions to his management questions. Paul also finds the link from KEY to his Farmade cropping software extremely useful.

Debbie Honey is responsible for the accounts at White Post and has found Sage works well for other businesses, but she explains: "KEY is built for farmers and is therefore superior for farm accounting."

Debbie can see cost savings from using KEY in two ways, firstly in the analysis of cropping and stocks. "KEY is able to cope with crops still in the ground at year end, in the past we have had to pay for accountants to produce spreadsheets for details of split crop information."

Secondly, money is saved in tracing missed tonnage, she explains: "Human error can occur when tons of vegetables are being shipped, with KEY we can have access to all the field information and a reconciliation trail links deliveries to invoices."

The one thing she doesn't like is the presentation of the journals. "I like debit and credit columns, but I'm getting used to it," she admits wryly!

"The data entry is so quick and easy with features to help like default numbers to the next cheque and date and number cross referencing of bank statements."