

## Case Study

**STOCKCROFT PIGS**



# STOCKCROFT aids expansion without risk

When Chris met Andrew Stockings at a wedding just after the BSE crisis, his mood was despondent. Cattle sheds lay empty and he was reluctant to fill them again. Andrew discussed the concept of “bed and breakfast” pigs, with the opportunities involved. On the Monday morning Andrew visited the farm and after a few hours and several cups of coffee, Chris had a plan of minimal changes to buildings and agreed to come into the STOCKCROFT fold...10 days later the pigs arrived!

Chris used the cattle sheds and covered the silage clamp so the fatteners could be accommodated. After a few months he changed to a nursery unit for stores to supply swill farmers. This had to stop when Foot and Mouth effectively put swill farmers out of business.



Several more cups of coffee were consumed before Chris decided to expand the unit to a continuous flow fattening operation with 150 pigs in/out weekly. The wasting disease that blighted so many businesses in the 90's led STOCKCROFT to adopt a batch supply system, so Chris changed to this form of operation.

1994/5 saw the construction of new purpose designed buildings with a wet feed system. Chris and Ali expanded from keeping 500 pigs to 1500. From 1998 to 1999 more expansion allowed the farm to install a fully automated wet feed system and the numbers increased to 2500 on site and a further 500 in 2004. In 2009/10 Chris and Ali decided to extend their existing buildings, which means they now fatten 4000 pigs on the farm.

Andrew always said “if you can look after cows you can look after pigs” Chris feels there is more to it than that. “Although some of the arable guys complain about loading the pigs, they are always on a high when we finish. It adds interest to their jobs. We use our straw, get the muck back, which I think is an underestimated benefit and there are al-

ways comings and goings in the yard, so our se-

curity is much better. The machinery is used more efficiently and on those wet winter days when I struggle to find work for the arable men to do, there is always something they can turn their hand to on the pig unit.”

STOCKCROFT remains a family run company and the office in near Wallingford is part of the family home. “We grew with their business, with their family. In turn our family has grown (Chris and Ali have two young sons) and STOCKCROFT is still helping me to expand my business. Some other contractors wouldn't worry if you disappeared tomorrow and they don't go out of their way if you have a problem. STOCKCROFT get involved, really help and allow me to expand at my own pace. I haven't had to over extend my borrowings and it has allowed me to invest in other opportunities when they have arisen”

Chris feels that he is a real part of a company to which he can relate. “When we go to Wallingford, we visit an office, but we also visit a working fattening unit. Often problems I am facing, the home farm might well be experiencing at the same time. Harvey is always at the end of the phone and Sally is in the office 7 days a week it seems!” And of the future.....“If I could find another unit tomorrow, I would!”

**For further information call Harvey Stoker on 07831 728298**

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# STOCKCROFT support businesses with expansion plans

Phil Burge was brought up on a family farm near Bridgewater with his two brothers Steve and Geoff. His parents Colin and Roz were second generation farmers who milked 30 cows on the 30 acre farm, renting a further 50 acres. They had pigs on the farm which they reared on the BOCM scheme.

After Phil attended Seale-Hayne he decided to pursue a career in the pig industry and ran an outdoor sow unit. He was very keen to have his independent business and his employer encouraged him. In 2000 he



built a fattening unit for 700 pigs but sadly his employer was unable to fill it. He found another farmer to contract finish pigs but after 12 months actively looked to change supplier. A local feed representative suggested he meet Andrew at the Pig Fair.

Phil recalled, 'When I talked to Andrew, I was very impressed. He was straight forward and committed to his Contractors. I also liked the fact he was a self-made man who understood my desire to expand my business.'

900 pigs were put into the unit and in 2004 Phil and his wife Amanda put up a new building to enable Phil to fatten 1600 pigs. He feels that his first impression was correct; he acknowledged that 'Stockcroft pays me regularly on the dot and always settles up at the end of each batch – which I understand is not the

case with some other companies.'

He was still able to work for another company on a part-time basis because he felt that the infrastructure with Stockcroft was very supportive. "Harvey is always on the end of the phone. The feedback is positive and if I have any anxieties the vet or Harvey are happy to visit the unit within 24 hours. The quality of the pigs coming in is excellent which makes my job so much easier."

In March 2006 Phil's good stockmanship was a deciding factor in Fawley Farms, Stockcroft's sister company employing him to monitor local pig nursery units. "What is important to me is that the business has a very positive outlook. I really feel part of the company, not just on the sidelines.

And what of the future? Phil smiled and said, "Well I had a meeting with Sally recently and we are expanding the buildings to accommodate 2,000 pigs."

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