

## How Total Software helps Bicton College both manage its Farm Records and train their students in using computerised farm systems



Bicton College is Devon's only land-based college. Bicton Home Farm is based half a mile away from the college campus and is run as a commercial unit as well providing a practical student training resource; demonstrating good practice, successful farm business management and production techniques.

When Paul Redmore joined Bicton College Home Farm as the Farm Manager in January 2006, he inherited a variety of software programs; previously purchased to process the financial and physical data for the farm record

keeping of the mixed 160 ha farm. Although experienced in operating a range of software programs himself, Paul quickly recognised that this was far from ideal in terms of the learning perspective for the students, the financial costs involved with software support, but most importantly, the time involved in maintaining the programs, as duplicating of data entry soon became evident.

In May 2006, Sum-It installed Total Standard Software to provide comprehensive accounting functions and management information for the dairy, sheep and arable enterprises at Bicton Home Farm. Paul started by manually loading the current cropping and recent lambing details, whilst the dairy program was created from an NMR link. Since July 2006, Total has been running as a fully integrated package. The accounts, livestock and arable records are now current; areas that require duplicate information are updated simultaneously and the Total system can now be maintained in just a couple of hours a week. They also have the facility to record and store physical events and actions such as calving, veterinary treatments, weights and arable applications, remotely on a Palmtop, which can be synchronised with the Total program at a later date.

All agricultural students have open access to a dedicated IT Centre on the main campus and Total has been installed on every PC to enable students to log on to the current farm data remotely from the farm office. Lecturers running the Agricultural Diploma courses and Foundation Degree in Agriculture, use the program as a teaching and learning resource. Students interrogate the data to verify investigations on performance management e.g. daily live weight gains, dairy fertility and milk production together with financial gross margin analysis relating to cropping. The flexibility of the program allows the students to export reports into Microsoft Excel and Word to be incorporated into assignments and reports.



Paul Redmore says: "Total software is now the leading office management tool for the College Farm. The speed at which data can be inputted has made the whole farm recording much more efficient. Integration of physical and financial data through Single Entry is a real plus and has saved hundreds of man hours over the past six years.

A wide range of standard reports across all areas and the ability to design our own bespoke reports when required is invaluable in monitoring all areas of the farm, and also fulfilling our statutory and farm assurance requirements, again saving many man hours when it comes to auditing and compiling reports on the farms progress.

Initially it seemed a lot of money to pay out for a piece of software, however, six years on and I can honestly say it has paid for itself many times over, and given me confidence that I have a robust and accurate recording system that is required for all areas of the farming business."