



**A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust
Report**

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**The Worshipful Company of Farmers
and Savills**



**Rural Estates:
Objectives, Governance and Growth**

Peter Wiggins-Davies

September 2017

NUFFIELD UK



NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST (UK)

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A Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report



*“Leading positive change in agriculture.
Inspiring passion and potential in people.”*

Date of report: September 2017

Title	Rural Estates: Objectives, Governance and Growth
Scholar	Peter Wiggins-Davies
Sponsor	The Worshipful Company of Farmers and Savills
Objectives of Study Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulfilment of the estate stewardship challenge• An understanding of objectives• Creation of strong governance• Investigation into the world of growth
Countries Visited	Germany, Greece, USA, and Australia
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estates are unique operations and are made up of six unique building blocks• To fulfil these building blocks a unique estate strategy is required• Once the building blocks are fulfilled, estates need a strong foundation• The most successful businesses have a “golden thread”• When evaluating growth projects, no one hat fits all• Estates are businesses with responsibilities, and are not charities



Executive Summary

I have three passions in my life: family, friends and Revesby Estate, and am fortunate enough to often enjoy all three at once. Revesby Estate is my family estate. It was first founded in 1143, and my family has celebrated over 300 years of unbroken ownership. To me the estate is more than just a business. It is almost a relative that needs caring for. My time is now and my stewardship will affect how future generations enjoy the estate.

The aim of my Nuffield Farming Scholarship was to help me fulfil my stewardship to the best of my abilities: to help me achieve my aim of passing the estate on to the next generation in a better condition: for the estate to deliver what I wish it to deliver.

A Nuffield Farming Scholarship is for travelling and my country selection was based on:

- Countries with a different economic environment to the UK
- Countries with a different social culture to the UK
- Countries that have successfully applied the principles behind my topic
- Countries that have a known point of interest

The above criteria resulted in me choosing to visit Germany, Greece, the United States of America, and Australia. While visiting these countries I made an effort to learn from both comparable and non-comparable businesses.

The first country I visited was Germany, with its very comparable estates sector. I learnt very quickly my objective of “in better condition” should not just be financially answered. I learnt that the estates sector is complicated and unique. Estates have the following building blocks:

- Custodianship
- Visual and historic objectives
- Social objectives
- Environmental objectives
- Complicated family involvement
- Diversified income streams

Stewardship refers to all of the above building blocks. If these building blocks are to be fulfilled a strategy needs creating. I believe that a simple strategy under the following headings can help fulfil this unique estate challenge:

- *Succession*
- *Keeping the family together*
- *Non-financial objectives*
- *Financial objectives*



Once these estate building blocks are fulfilled, estates need to be managed like any other business. All the countries visited taught me the importance of strong foundations. I learnt that the key to a strong foundation is:

- Leadership
- Culture
- Employees
- Routine functions routinely
- A hunger to learn from others
- An accurate understanding of assets and operations
- An accurate understanding of financial and non-financial performance

Only once the unique estate building blocks are fulfilled and the foundation is strong, should estates start to approach growth. I learnt that I was wrong viewing growth as solely bolt-on projects. The most successful businesses had a “golden thread” (identity). The most common ways in which businesses were growing were:

- Scale/replication
- Cross selling and vertical integration
- Driven by subsidy
- Diversification

I learnt about growth evaluation, debt, and the importance of the business brand.

To conclude, my Nuffield Farming Scholarship has changed my entire business approach. No longer am I a magpie constantly attracted to new and shinier things. The day-to-day and the foundation are now getting far more attention. I am discovering my “golden thread” and aiming for a more organic growth.

Estates are businesses with responsibilities, and not charities.



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DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this report are my own and not necessarily those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, or of my sponsors, or of any other sponsoring body.

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1. Personal introduction

I have three passions in my life: family, friends and Revesby Estate. I am often fortunate enough to enjoy all three at once.

My wife is German and has bravely made the transition from a trendy German city to an isolated house in rural Lincolnshire. She has not only mastered the language but also the local dialect! Together we have a wonderful daughter who brings us much joy. When we need a break, we both enjoy travel especially to Germany or London.

I am a proud member of the Farmers Club, the Country Land and Business Association, National Farmers Union, and the Royal Forestry Society. I also sit on many charitable trusts and am a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Farmers.



Figure 1: Yours truly

I am most fortunate in having the most caring and supporting parents. My father has never held me back from the business and we make a very strong team.

Our family estate, Revesby Estate

The Revesby lands were first joined together in 1143 and the estate gained its identity at that time. However, it only became a private estate when King Henry VIII dissolved the monastery and gifted the estate to his brother-in-law. In 1714 the estate was purchased by Joseph Banks, since which time it has benefited from unbroken ownership. Currently my father, my brother and I are its custodians.

Even though I have been involved in the estate from a very early age, I only joined my father in its management after I completed my degree from Harper Adams University. My classroom education did not end with my university years and I am proud to say that in 2013 I endured the Worshipful Companies Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management, under the wise stewardship of the late Professor John Alliston. I use the word 'endured', because it was tough and it did challenge. On my return from this course we were able to make real changes to our family business.



REVESBY
ESTATE

Figure 2: Our family coat of arms and estate logo

We are located in Lincolnshire, between the historic city of Lincoln and the coast. We are very open about estate matters and especially enjoy giving tours of our various operations.

From a very early age it was clear that my destiny was set and I would dedicate my working life to the estate. To me Revesby Estate is more than an asset: it is more akin to a beloved relative who needs caring for.

Thank you, Nuffield Farming, for the experience and knowledge I have gained during this Scholarship.



2. Background to my study

Good start. Wrong title.

As I mentioned in my personal introduction, my family estate is extremely important to me. I feel a strong sense of responsibility. As generations before me had theirs, it is now my time. My actions will reflect how future generations refer to my stewardship and enjoy the estate.

I originally had as the title to my study: “The Evaluation and Implementation of Effective Growth on Rural Estates” as my underlying objective is to pass the estate on to the next generation in a better condition than I inherited it (a popular objective for farmers and landowners). But I was defining “better condition” purely in financial terms.

I created a battle plan with possible heading titles including:

- How do you evaluate whether or not you are able to grow?
- How do you evaluate if the time is right to grow?
- Through what channels are you discovering opportunities for potential growth?
- What mechanisms are you using when evaluating your potential growth projects?
- Once you have adopted a growth project, what tools and techniques have you found to be the most effective in turning strategy into reality?

I knew growth was especially important in a commodity sector. Standing still can mean going backwards, a point proven by the ever-increasing farm sizes in my local area.

After hearing from colleagues and seeing all the endless growth opportunities in periodicals, I was making the assumption that growth was something on the side, or a bolt-on project. I am so pleased I started my Nuffield Farming study tour by first visiting comparable estates in Germany. After just my third visit I realised my original title needed changing.

The change

Like a bolt from the blue Germany taught me two lessons. Firstly, and most importantly financial profit is not my biggest driver: other drivers play a very significant role and my definition of “better condition” should not only be financially measured. I recently heard this referred to as the ‘triple balance sheet’ (quadruple for estates!)

Secondly, growth has to be sustainable and built on a strong foundation. Paraphrasing Albrecht Freiherr Knigge, a German estate owner who summarised the problem so well, you would not turn your bungalow into a two-storey building without first having a strong foundation.

This caused me to rethink my title. I still needed to investigate economic growth but I felt I also needed to understand what I wanted from my estate and what creates a stable foundation. My objective remained the same: only the definition of “better condition” has changed.

The above points are very personal, they change from estate to estate, hence my new title:

Rural estates: Objectives, Governance and Growth



3. Where I went

From the outset it was clear that the strength of my report depended on my visiting the right people and businesses in the right countries.

3a. Country selection

To aid the country selection I created the following criteria:

- Countries with a different economic environment to the UK
- Countries with a different social culture to the UK
- Countries that have successfully applied the principles behind my topic
- Countries that have a known point of interest



Figure 3: Sensible packing for every eventuality - never did wear my dinner jacket

This helped me narrow my choice of countries down to Germany, Greece, the United States of America, and Australia.

Germany was a strong contender from the start. It is the world’s fourth largest economy and has a relatively high population density. Most critically, it has a very similar historic estate sector. I decided to visit Germany first for this very reason, with the hope it would provide further inspiration for questions that I may then be able to answer from the rest of my travels.

Greece was chosen for very different reasons. It has had a struggling economy in recent years and I wanted to understand how businesses were being affected and how they were weathering the economic storm.

Having the largest economy in the world was not the reason why I chose the United States of America (USA). I chose the USA for its aggressive entrepreneurial “can do” spirit. I never thought that they would have estates like at home, but luck and fate would lead me to one such estate - amazingly one that was owned by the same family who sold us our estate, 300 years ago.

Finally, Australia was chosen because I had heard much about their approach to risk, debt, growth and inheritance planning. I also chose to go to Australia as it was the only country on my list that had a strong Nuffield Farming presence which I wished to explore.

From the outset I made the decision to travel for a longer period of time than was strictly necessary to fulfil the terms of my Scholarship; 16 weeks in total comprised as shown below.

Country	When visited	Reason for selection
Germany	March-May 2016 – 5 weeks total	Similar historic estate sector
Greece	March 2016 – 3 weeks	Struggling with an economic storm
USA	July/August 2016 – 4 weeks total	Strong “can do” entrepreneurial spirit
Australia	December 2016 – 4 weeks	Their approach to risk, debt, growth and inheritance planning



3b. People/business selection

Finding strong businesses and people to interview in the chosen countries was surprisingly easy. I tried to visit a range of businesses from a range of sectors. The diversity was vast, from legacy businesses spanning centuries to very aggressive start-ups; from ‘turn-around’ specialists to business mentors, even a Philadelphian homicide detective.



Figure 4: Hire car had space to spare



4. Characteristics of rural estates: what are we dealing with?

If estates are to deliver what we wish, we first need to understand exactly what we are dealing with.

From the 70 businesses I visited I would classify ten as rural estates. The vast majority of these were in Germany, but to my surprise I found examples in both the USA and Greece.

I am now of the opinion that the estates sector consists of three further sectors:

- 1) Ring-fence estates, where the family both live and rely on for the vast majority of their income
- 2) Estates with business interests beyond the ring-fence
- 3) Non-historic estates

For the relevance of comparison to my own situation, I chose just to investigate estates that were more ring-fenced in their nature.

These comparable estates have helped me build up a picture of what characterises a country estate. I like to refer to these as 'Estate building blocks'.

Before I go any further I have to stress:, not every estate demonstrated all of the following building blocks and sometimes the lines were blurred between farms and estates.

4a. Building block 1: Custodianship

Around the world I visited many estates that had been in the same family for a considerable amount of time. Two examples were:

Otto Freiherr Grote, whose family have owned and managed the same German estate – and even lived in the same castle – for 353 years.

The Shirley plantation owned by the Carter family. This American plantation was founded in 1613 making it the oldest farm and family owned business in USA.

This legacy resulted in a feeling of custodianship rather than ownership. This is something I can relate to strongly. It is almost as if I am borrowing my estate from my ancestors and successors. This custodianship relates to an emotional connection to very specific assets. As a result, the idea of selling or moving is unthinkable.

By being so attached to their physical assets the majority of rural estates were geographically fixed to one location. I saw far more flexibility in other businesses. For example:



Figure 5: Enno Freiherr von Ruffin Gut Basthorst family tree (Germany)



- Chalmers and Lori Anne Carr, who own Titan Farms, are the largest peach growers on the east coast of America, with over 5800 acres under peaches and over 1000 further acres under broccoli and bell peppers. Chalmers and Lori started in California, but due to high land prices and lack of water, moved to South Carolina.
- In 1983 Patrick Duffeler created Williamsburg Winery. He looked at 52 possible USA locations, before finally settling in one spot.
- Cam McKellar, in Australia, sold his farm and purchased another nearby because it made financial sense and fitted with his intended lifestyle change.

My travels taught me that association to the same physical assets bring many disadvantages:

- Prevents geographical movement to better business conditions
- Results in a risk-averse approach, as there is no exit strategy
- Can result in assets being locked in high tax groups
- Prevents enjoyment of capital uplift

In Atlanta, USA, I managed to set up a meeting with Mark Hefner, the president and CEO of N2Growth. N2Growth made the 2016 Forbes List as one of the top consultancy companies. His clients are extremely diverse and range from The Ritz Carlton to the New York Times and Ebay. Mark specialises in strategy and change. He has advised at senior management level in the USA, Canada, South America, Australia, Europe and the former Soviet Union. Mark arranged the meeting location (The Ritz of course!). I remember his excitement and how he referred to this custodianship as vision.

“Leave it stronger and better for the next generation”
Otto Freiherr Grote, Juehnde Estate

4b. Building block 2: Visual objectives/historic assets

I was privileged to see some stunning estates, where the wealth and centuries of continued succession had resulted in an array of projects involving digging, planting and building. These assets were a matter of great pride, but also great expense. Their construction methods and age resulted in their needing constant maintenance.

One of the grandest was in the USA, where I met William Cecil whose family have the Biltmore Estate. To put this into context, the main house is the largest privately-owned house in the USA.



Figure 6: Biltmore Estate, Manor House, USA



When it came to incredible historic assets, Germany spoilt me too. One fine example was that of Carl Graf Von Scheel-Plessen's Sierhagen Estate in Altenkrempe with its schloss, moat and extensive outbuildings.

This extra burden of cost is definitely unique to estates. Nowhere on my travels did I experience anything similar. It also has to be highlighted that in some cases these historic assets were wrapped up in historic agreements, resulting in lower incomes. In London I had a meeting with Sue Joy, team manager for the LPA and property management team at Savills. She was very surprised to hear that estates would keep rented residential properties that were loss-making.



Figure 7: Panker Estate's farm workshop is thatched (Germany)

4c. Building block 3: Social objectives

While visiting the German and English estates, I quickly felt a sense of identity and community.

One such estate was Panker in Northern Germany. It is the quintessential estate and perfectly fits with my building blocks. It has been owned by the Landgraves of Hessen since 1739. The estate's activities are very diverse and amongst others include: forestry, agriculture, shops, cottages, a restaurant and a hotel. It has been managed by Heinrich Von Der Decken for 15 years.

Panker Estate both intentionally and unintentionally has a big impact on the local community.

Unintentional

Panker Estate is a major employer and the largest landlord in the immediate area. One of the reasons for being such a large landlord is houses that were once used to house employees are now let.

Intentional

Again, using Panker as an example, residential tenants are chosen who will fit and contribute to the community. Furthermore, the estate funds the church, has created educational walks, and hosts ten community events a year.



Figure 8: One of Panker Estate's many houses (Germany)



I witnessed many businesses doing many good deeds. However, unlike estates, they were more able to change where and how much they invested.

In America I met Keith Wennek, CEO for a company called Growth Drivers Consulting. They help create vision and then the implementation strategy. They place very high importance on people training. He managed perfectly to combine his social objectives with his business. He created a team-building programme called ‘bikes for life’. Teams compete for parts of children’s bikes and then construct them. Once completed (and I hope checked by a competent person!), the bikes get gifted to local deprived children.

“Must keep traditions and communities alive.”
 Carl Graf Von Scheel-Plessen, Sierhagen Estate

4c. Building Block 4: Environmental objectives

As with the upkeep of historic assets, many estate owners felt a duty of care to ‘their patch’. They felt a need to improve habitats. Environmentally, Ludolf Von Maltzan’s farm had the strongest environmental credentials of any business I visited. He had taken his passion for the environment beyond organic and was a certified Demeter Farm. A Demeter Farm follows a theory of biodynamic agriculture; it views the farm as a single holistic organism.



Figure 9: Meticulously maintained woodlands on the Prontstorf Estate (Germany)

4d. Building Block 5: Family

Estates are often family businesses; in some cases with respected lineage like the Prinz von Schleswig Holstein (I greatly enjoyed an afternoon tittle and chit chat about fly fishing and pheasant shooting with the Prince - oh and about Nuffield of course!).

I witnessed three different types of family association:

- a) ownership
- b) management
- c) involvement



Figure 10: Enjoying lunch with the Rawl Family: Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc. (On a Sunday morning one does not require a jacket and tie to frequent a Waffle House) (USA)



My travels showed me that each type can be both independent and collective. One perfect example was the Biltmore Estate, where *ownership* was with multiple family members, but *management* was in the hands of fewer family members and *involvement* included wives.

Involvement is interesting. I am of the opinion that partners play a larger role in rural estates or farming businesses than in most businesses. I put this down to the fact that often the family is living on the shop floor. This was certainly the case for every estate I visited, whether it was Albrecht Freiherr Knigge's, which was surrounded by lush lawn grass, or Rüdiger Müller, Bietikow Estate in the middle of his main farmyard.

One estate owner I visited, who wished to remain anonymous, pointed out that keeping the peace in his family with their different interests was more stressful than running the estate!

"The biggest threat to my business would be the loss of my wife."

(he relied on her as a spring board for ideas)

Anon

"To protect growth, you need to control the family."

William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

4e. Building Block 6: Diversity in operated enterprises

The majority of the estates I visited had agricultural and sometimes forestry operations at their heart. These two stalwarts were usually then supported by an array of other enterprises. For example, Enno Freiherr Von Ruffin from Basthorst operates a farming operation which is both owned and rented; forestry operations; landscaping operations; a hotel and restaurant; and events ranging from weddings to Christmas markets.

No businesses I visited around the world possessed as much diversity as the German estates did. The core competencies varied so much: from producing a commodity, such as wheat, to providing a service, such as weddings.

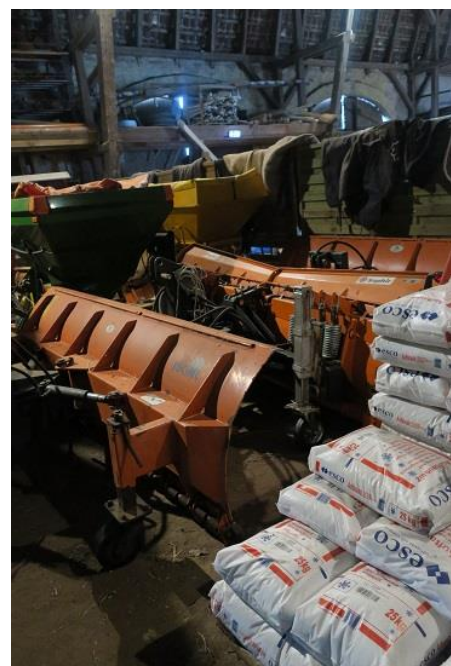


Figure 11: Enno Freiherr Von Ruffin, Basthorst Estate - landscaping equipment (Germany)



4d. Should ring-fenced family estates be managed differently?

I believe that the estate building blocks bring many strengths and challenges that are unique to estates: if not in their individuality then certainly in their collectiveness.

These differences place far more expectations on estates than the average business would have placed on them.

Mark Hefner made the point that estates have very specific visions that need defining. However the actual running of the business should be no different to other businesses and should be rooted in strong foundations.

I agree with Mark Hefner (*the president and CEO of N2Growth – see Chapter 4a*): once the building blocks are fulfilled, business is business.



Figure 12:With William Cecil from Biltmore Estate (USA).
300 years ago his ancestor with the same name, sold my family our estate!



5. Fulfilling the unique challenge of estates

Many of the German and English estates I visited had specific management strategies for individual parts - or enterprises - of their business: for example a marketing strategy or a debt payment strategy. However, rarely did they have overarching strategies that covered the entire estate challenge (the estate Building Blocks).

I felt the strategies lay in their hearts, but were just not documented or communicated.

My American and Australian trip showed me the importance of clearly understanding what you want and where you want to go and then building your business around it.

I have learnt that a strategy does not have to be a clumsy, complicated, corporate document. One of the most refreshing approaches to strategy was from Heinrich Von Der Decken from Panker Estate who said: *“If you cannot explain it on one page, maybe you do not understand it.”*

The cornerstone to a strategy is having objectives. These objectives give a direction, purpose and accountability. They also help businesses move with the times.

“We need to be organised to be successful.”
Cam McKellar, Australia

In Australia I visited Jan Vydra who, with a business partner, in 2008 created Fresh Leaf. It has since become one of Australia’s leading herb growers and distributors. They now annually produce more than 180,000 bunches of 17 different herbs and salads for major retailers, independent supermarkets, greengrocers and the hospitality industry. Fresh Leaf has a clear sharp strategy underpinned by one big objective: “50 million plants cultivated a year by 2022”. Jan’s Fresh Leaf strategic objective is very cleverly constructed using a SMART-format objective:

- **Specific:** refers to cultivated plants
- **Measurable:** 50 million
- **Achievable:** yes
- **Relevant:** yes, drives profit
- **Time-based:** by 2022



Figure 13: Hans-Caspar Graf zu Rantzau, Pronstorf Estate, outside his Schloss (Germany)

During my travels, I was able to enjoy the delights of Intercourse. Intercourse is one of the larger Amish settlements. Even the Amish move with the times, as shown by their shopping habits.

Figure 14: Amish shopping in a German discounter supermarket (USA)



I realise that the creation of strategy documents is not something that will be met with open arms, but more of an eye-roll (like from my father). However, the world is changing, possibly faster now than ever before. As such, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

I believe that four elements hold the key to answering this unique estate challenge (the estate building blocks). I am now going to outline these:

5a. Succession

Succession is a burning issue not just for estates but also for many farms. It is a topic that so often gets ignored. Many might ignore the issue as it makes reference to their own demise.

Interestingly, several estates were not blindly following the primogeniture tradition of 'the eldest son gets everything'. Being a younger son, this is an approach of which I wholeheartedly approve!

Before my study tour travels, when I thought of inheritance, I only pictured asset transfer. In Greece, Germany, America and Australia I witnessed very successful examples of where ownership and occupation had been split.

One such example was Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc., in America. They are a large-scale grower, packer and distributor of salads and vegetables. They have created a very effective family-owned and led culture. In total six members of the same family held high positions.



Figure 15: Redestos Head Office (Greece)

Another example, this time in Greece, was Mr N Efthymiadis from the Redestos Group. His family founded the business in 1935. He is the second generation of wealth, but his grandfather was an immigrant who started with nothing. His business is very diverse and consists of:

- 1) Agricultural inputs: formulating from marketing to distribution, including plant protection products, seeds and fertilisers
- 2) Plant propagation: research and development of seed varieties (GM)
- 3) Services: laboratory and consultancy services (tests safety of 50% of Greek exports from 3 laboratories)
- 4) Food services: branding, specialised commodities, contract farming
- 5) Greenhouses: tomatoes, potatoes, kiwi and mandarins

Here the succession issue had been resolved by making each family member the CEO of his or her own company, with all dividends going to the top company. His strict reporting rules helped prevent family members interfering with each other.

I witnessed three main reasons for getting the ownership transfer right:



- 1) Ensuring that the assets are prepared in the best way to reduce inheritance tax. This may mean transferring the assets early enough to get relief, or putting the assets into the correct trading vehicle. Inheritance tax can really bite, especially given the disparity between asset worth and asset revenue.
- 2) To make sure that after any splits in ownership the core business remains profitable.
- 3) To keep the family together and allow siblings to plan for alternative careers if so required.

Estates need to decide and communicate at the earliest opportunity whom they wish to inherit and lead, and by what mechanism the decision will be made.

“Transfer of leadership can be more important to get right than assets.”
Otto Freiherr Grote, Juehnde Estate

“These agreements need to be legally written. By being legally written family squabbles are less likely to have life-changing impacts.”
Barb Madden, Smithfield Cattle Co

“With inheritance, fair is not always equal”.
Albrecht Freiherr Knigge jun, Freiherr Knigge GmbH.

5b. Keeping the family together

My inspiration for this section again comes from Biltmore Estate. They have created a very effective family constitution document. Amongst other things the document clearly sets out the annual dedicated family meeting. In this meeting three things happen. The family are:

- 1) Given a business report
- 2) Trained by external advisors in key areas e.g. finance
- 3) Brought together through team building exercises



Figure 16: Outside the Biltmore Estate offices (USA)



The need to educate and develop the abilities of family members as shown above was repeated by Mr N Efthymiadis, who stated you need to train children from a young age to understand the board and drawings.

“To protect growth you need to keep the family close together.”
William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

“Always thinking about protectionism and trying to reduce friction.”
Mr N Efthymiadis, Redestos group

5c. Non-financial objectives

Non-financial objectives were one of the biggest points of difference between estates and other businesses. It has to be worthwhile quantifying exactly what we are aiming to achieve, so that it is both achieved and budgeted for. I feel that they can be grouped into 6 categories:

1. The core assets that will never be sold
2. Visual and historic asset protection and improvement
3. Environmental protection and improvement
4. Community protection and improvement
5. Estate values and culture
6. Personal goals

I would like to expand on two of these factors: personal goals and estate values and culture.

The term ‘Values Statement’ is a very corporate world tag, but something I feel is extremely important and applicable to estates.

Thomas Hefner (*the president and CEO of N2Growth – see Chapter 4a*): had the following to say about values statements. He said they:

- provide a window into the business
- help form culture
- should be the key criteria for succession planning
- authenticate and relate back to all parts of the operation

If estates’ values are so important why not document and communicate them? Especially if you are relying on managers and employees to uphold these values? In today’s highly connected social media world, it is critical businesses abide by their values. If not,

everyone will find out and as a result reputational, and even financial damage can be sustained.



Figure 17: Outside the Shirley Plantation (USA)



Personal goals were unique to each business. I visited some estates where events were held in the house and others where they wanted no events on the entire estate. It is important to set the boundaries as to what your personal objectives are, and what elements of the estate drive the business.

All businesses have different drivers and more often than not they are not simply financial, but also the sense of enjoyment and achievement as individuals. By clearly setting the boundaries for personal objectives, generational squabbles are less likely to occur.



Figure 18: Feeling the passion from Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridis Winery (Greece)

5d. Financial objectives

As I have discovered, estates have multiple non-income-generating ways of spending money. However, they are still businesses and fundamentally, to be sustainable, have to generate more money than they spend.

In Australia I met a business turnaround specialist called Don Robertson, who is the principal of Business Turnaround Services. His company takes businesses with turnovers of between A\$1million and A\$10 million, and makes them more profitable. He highlighted the need to put a target figure on what you expect from your business. I think that this number should not be static but change over time; it may need to increase to take into account, for example, schooling fees.

I believe this figure should be made up as follows:

- a. Family living costs (this needs to include everything: tax, drawings, personal assets)
- b. Non-economic objective costs
- c. Debt servicing and future liabilities

By grouping as shown above, estates will know if they are living within their means and, if the business does fall on harder times, they have the ability to easily identify and reduce spending in less critical areas.

Only one of the estates I visited was owned and managed by someone in their mid-30s and that was Carl Graf Von Scheel-Plessen from Sierhagen Estate. I feel that the above objectives should be enough to give the older generation the confidence in continuation and possibly succession.



6. Building the strong foundation

Now that I have outlined what success looks like, comes the tricky part of achieving it.

“Growth has to have strong foundation at the start.”

Keith Wennek, Growth Drivers Consulting

“Before growing your house has to be in order, growth will just make existing problems bigger.”

Gunther Neumann, Remonids Australia Pty Ltd.

Before my Nuffield Farming journey I did not give the strong foundation enough attention. Instead I was distracted by the endless possible projects that were available. This approach often caused an exciting environment frequently laced with much firefighting and stress. My Nuffield Farming experience has taught me this approach is unsustainable. Around the world the best businesses I visited had a “it just works feeling”, everything “just clicked” into place. In my search for growth I learned I needed to first go backwards to then go forwards. I have tried to investigate what factors were key to this strong foundation.



Figure 19: Mark Hefner after our meeting (USA)

6a. “All for one and one for all”: leadership, culture and employee

6a.i. Leadership

“A leader is the most important contributor to success of an organisation - it is a silver bullet.”

Mark Hefner. N2Growth

Without referring to my notes I cannot remember the names of every business I visited. I can however clearly recall the people. I was fortunate enough to meet their leaders and drivers of change. The leadership styles were often unique to the person and his or her circumstances. I recall William Cecil from Biltmore Estate. I met him in his rather impressive offices where we discussed complicated structures and boardrooms. (Being stubborn, British and a little eccentric, I was wearing the same tie and brown chinos on my tour around Stuart Tighe’s Australian farm in his rather dirty ‘ute’ – see next page). Both were equally impressive leaders.



Mark Hefner had the following to say on leadership:

- There are many different leadership styles: they depend on the organisation and how it is performing e.g. doing well/badly, rock/don't rock the boat
- Leadership determines strategy
- Leaders must be strategic thinkers and good communicators
- People must follow leaders
- Trust is the most important aspect
- Leaders must know their blind spots (I was surprised to learn skills-gap consultants exist)

Other positive leadership attributes of leaders I often heard were:

- Commitment and conviction to follow judgment
- Get people to work as a motivated team
- Involved in and aware of the day-to-day
- Conviction to hold people to account
- Ability to prioritise what is important
- Ability to be honest with oneself
- Be prepared to be challenged
- High emotional intelligence
- Good time management
- Ability to delegate
- Infectious passion

The Australian leg of my study was unintentionally timed during the peak of the Australian harvest. However every business still had time for me. I was most impressed by Stuart Tighe, who managed to spare the entire day even though he had 10 combines operating at the time. He was able to do this because of his good time-management and organisational skills.

Titan Farms was so clear about what good leadership looks like, they even display it on their website. They use the following seven categories:

- Employees
- Customers
- Quality
- Food safety and security
- Community
- Land
- Business practices

If you own and run your estate, you are inevitably the leader. The US especially taught me the power of effective leadership training.

"Only 35% of my time is spent in the office."
Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate



“Concentrate on big issues, not small ones.”
Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate

“As you grow your business your leadership skills need to grow as well.”
Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridis Winery

*“With growth you need to become more professional, like gears in a car,
with production, customers and governance.”*
Albrecht Freiherr Knigge jun, Freiherr Knigge GmbH

*“Be careful what you say:
your words can be like bullets you cannot take back.”*
Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, Prontstorf Estate

6a.ii. Culture

After leadership, I heard time and time again how important the correct culture is. Just as with leadership, culture is very subjective. However, it is more tangible. I experienced many different business cultures during my travels, five examples included:

- Panker Estate and their focus on **control**
- Titan Farms and the drive for **quality**
- Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc and their culture of **friendliness**
- Boolah Partnerships with a **hunger for growth**
- Philadelphian Homicide Department and their remit of **efficiency**



Figure 20: Panker Estate has a very organised and controlled culture, as shown by their farm workshop. (Germany)

Having seen the positive and negative impact culture can have on a business, I chose to investigate a little further. Again, this was an area of Mark Hefner’s expertise. His opening gambit was to repeat the well known phrase “*culture eats strategy for breakfast*”. He went on to say:

- Culture needs to be in place before the strategy
- A strong culture has core values at its heart
- These values have to be communicated and adopted
- Desirable culture is often top down
- Culture can be manmade or architected



- There are only two ways to change it: new rules or new people
- It is the hardest thing to change and most fail
- When you try and change it, pull as few levers as possible

It was immediately clear that not all cultures would fit all businesses. In America I often witnessed result-hitting cultures. I question if this can be truly married to the non-financial objective and estate building blocks mentioned earlier in this report.

I feel that the two most important cultural aims for estates are honesty and a willingness to improve.

“Strategy can help maintain culture.”
William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

6a.iii. Employees

Most businesses I visited were quick to compliment their team and highlight their importance. The team members are the ones who actually make things happen, so they are key to both the present and the growth. It is not possible to micromanage; we can only work with the best and trust them.

Recurring themes I heard on my travels were:

- Find stars who are down to earth
- Get someone who has had a tough boss
- Hire to complement not duplicate
- A-grade, or not at all
- You have to have the right pegs in the right holes
- Know what you are looking for and communicate effectively

Most employers were looking for:

- Team players
- Personality that fits the business values
- Adaptability
- Trustworthiness
- Enthusiasm to learn

I discussed motivation at great length and the driving factors were the same around the world.

- Ownership, accomplishment, recognition
- Work/personal balance
- Friendly, encouraging management
- Space to do their job
- Effective training
- Not swamped with paperwork



Figure 21: Learning from the David Brownhill team (Australia)



"Cooks can spin plates, but someone still has to peel the potatoes."
Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, Prontstorf Estate

"Always look for young potential and then train."
Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridi Winery

"Only give employees paper if they really need it."
Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate

"Best employees come from within."
Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridi Winery

"Send all your employees on a man management course."
Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridi Winery

"I like that I have a trade union as it gives transparency."
Mr N Efthymiadis, Redestos group

"People like to belong to a successful organisation."
Mr N Efthymiadis, Redestos group

"Always substitute labour for mechanisation."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"People are key, but their development is more important."
Keith Wennek, Growth Drivers Consulting

"Employees must help selling."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

I quickly recognised how in some organisations the employees required very little input to deliver a maximum output. The best advice I heard was *'hire tough, manage easy'*. The most effective businesses used labour to the full; often this meant growing a team that was able to do any task.



6b. Learning from others

I was surprised to find how similar the challenges I witnessed around the world were. More often than not businesses were trying to achieve something that had already been done somewhere else. The most advanced, forward thinking businesses know this and are always hungry to learn from others. Those with the most information were in the strongest position.

I witnessed three main sources of business information being used:

6b.i. The advisory company

This is the obvious option and an option that many estates tend to rely heavily on. In America I visited an array of business advisors and was amazed at the breadth and depth on offer, from skills-gap analysis to customer trend analyses.

I learnt that there are two types of advisors: those that focus on content and those that focus on strategy.



Figure 22: Learning from Gomez and some farmers he mentors (USA)

6b.i.a. Content

Content advice is usually operational and specialises in the day to day. It is one-off in nature and requires industry knowledge.

“Be careful with operational advisors as they can become engrained.”
Keith Wennek, Growth Drivers Consulting

6b.i.b. Strategic

Strategic advice is more transformational and looks further into the future. Strategic advisors do not need to have the in-depth industry knowledge.

“The top 10% of American businesses rely heavily on strategy advisors.”
Keith Wennek, Growth Drivers Consulting

Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc. used professionals very effectively. I was very kindly invited into a board meeting which brought together experts in many different fields. Excitingly, as it was lunch time, a food trend expert came in and cooked up various different meals to demonstrate how their salad crops could be consumed. All the advisors who came to the meeting had clear expectations.



The relationship with advisors was also interesting and varied from business to business. Some businesses preferring a 'pick and drop' model and others more of a close mentoring relationship. The mentoring model was especially popular in Australia and America.

In Australia I spoke at length about mentoring to two people, Thomas Eastlake and Barb Madden.

Thomas left the financial world to set up and run a cherry farm. He has three mentors, as well as being a mentor himself.

Barb's family own and run the Smithfield Cattle Company. They grow and market cattle domestically and internationally. The company was founded in the 1920s and has three generations working together.

They both concluded that mentors:

- Are extremely important for personal development of key people in the business
- Help leaders step back from the 'fog of war' and have a 'helicopter view'
- Should be met on a regular basis, often monthly

Barb went on to say that she feels it is worth paying for a good mentor.

Some businesses, especially German estates, highlighted some concerns associated with paid advisors, including the point that it is not their money and they can be disconnected – and their business is ultimately to make money out of you.

One of the best tips I received was to view advisers like an employee: give them job descriptions and clearly explain what success looks like, then appraise them on it.

"If you go at it alone you run the risk of making mistakes that others have made before you." N Efthymiadis, Redestos Group Effigies

"Advisors will only give you tips, you still have to be the one that executes"
Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate

"Use the very best from the start" Sam Lord, Eliris Estate

*"Do not be scared to use professionals
but set out the parameters at the start."*
Barb Madden, Smithfield Cattle Co



*“Use different advisors for different jobs -
for important things, use top advisors; for less important, small advisors”*
Otto Freiherr Grote, Juehnde Estate

“Get people with experience and hunger; 35 to 45 is a good age.”
Cam McKellar

“Know which advisor to use for which tasks.”
Gunther Neumann, Remonids Australia Pty Ltd

In conclusion I feel that advisors do have a strong role to play. Their role is to add value and their costs should be paid by the value that they add to the business.

6b.ii. Visiting peers

I was taken aback by how far and wide many people had travelled in the search for information and knowledge. Chalmers and Lori Carr (Titan Farms) travelled to ten different countries in Europe, New Zealand and South Africa, visiting 20 businesses before purchasing their processing line.



Figure 23: The very warm and welcoming Chilvers family, who are regularly entertaining Nuffield Farming Scholars (Australia)

In Atlanta, I met the business mentor, Mike Gomez, who is the president of Allegro Consulting. In a friendly way he reminded me very much of a *Top Gun* character. Mike had flown trainer jets in the US air force as well as being an aerospace engineer for the US Navy. To our meeting he brought with him a farming couple whose business he had helped build and grow. Mike highlighted many times the importance of visiting peers. In his own words: *“learn from the big boys”*.

“Share your business idea with people you respect. Use them as a filter.”
N Efthymiadis, Redestos group

*“Twice a year make a visit with managers,
but make sure you travel in one car.”*
Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate



“Must know them well enough that you are getting the truth.”
Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, Prontstorf Estate

Learning from peers does not just have to be one-to-one. James Birch from Doddington Hall and Gardens finds being on boards ranging from the CLA to Country Houses very useful. Here he learns information that, often, other people have to pay for.

My travels taught me the importance of networks and keeping and growing contacts, and then allocating time and visiting them.

6b.iii. Boards

A very corporate sounding word that many, including my own family, initially struggle to see the relevance of. The Australian farms I visited had a far more open attitude to boards. Often the “boards” were quite hybrid in nature and did not totally follow the rule book. Fundamentally, they consisted of a collection of professionals (3 was the most desirable number) who met at least twice a year to discuss performance and strategy. Many boards did not have voting rights.

The most desirable board members were those who are successful in business and respected in their industry, especially those in manufacturing, investments and marketing. Some people had their mentors on the board.

The advantages of boards in family businesses included:

- keeping the family together
- accountability
- direction
- helicopter view
- many minds create better things
- acting as a filter
- discipline

I was fortunate enough to visit David Brownhill at his farm in Australia and for him to visit me in England. David’s family has a very progressive cereal farm that has seen much growth in recent years. He has been operating a board for a considerable number of years. He feels that the board has certainly contributed to the success of his business.

In Brisbane, Australia, I met Mathew Durak. He is the majority stakeholder of Stahmann Farms, which has over 700 hectares of irrigated pecan groves. Just as with David Brownhill his board structure has helped drive his business. His key board meeting agenda points are:

- Risk: operational, health and safety, environmental
- Operational review and performance budget
- Strategy



In Australia I learnt how useful an independent chair can be at resolving family conflict and how the chair needs both 'soft' and 'policing' skills.

"Board members need different views, but have your best wishes at heart."
Patrick Duffeler, Williamsburg Winery

"Only have a board if you have scale, diversity, or family divisions."
Thomas Eastlake

"The most effective boards meet on a regular basis, a minimum of quarterly and the meetings last for no more than three hours."
Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

"The board sets our salaries." Barb Madden, Smithfield Cattle Co

"Every business needs a board with an accountant, a lawyer, and a local business manager."
Keith Wennek, Growth Drivers Consulting

Many estates, especially those in trust, have an annual (or more frequent) meeting. To an extent they are performing a similar function. It may be just worth reviewing the agenda for the meeting, and how strategic the meetings actually are, and if other non-executive members would also add value.

6c. Routine, routinely

When things work, they can just work; the routine happens routinely without constant effort and attention. When things "click" it is rarely by accident, it requires effort and attention.

I believe a three-step process aids in this routine functioning routinely. The leading inspiration for this is from Francis Seriau. Francis is a London-based business mentor who works one-on-one with business leaders.

1) What do you have/not have?

List every asset you have, as well as all debt. It is worthwhile considering its condition and its value, this will help when analysing how effectively assets are being used.

2) What do you do?

The organogram figure is a wonderful way to show on one page exactly how the business operates. Its construction is easy:



- List all your income streams
- Group them by cost then by sector
- Add management hierarch
- Link them back to business

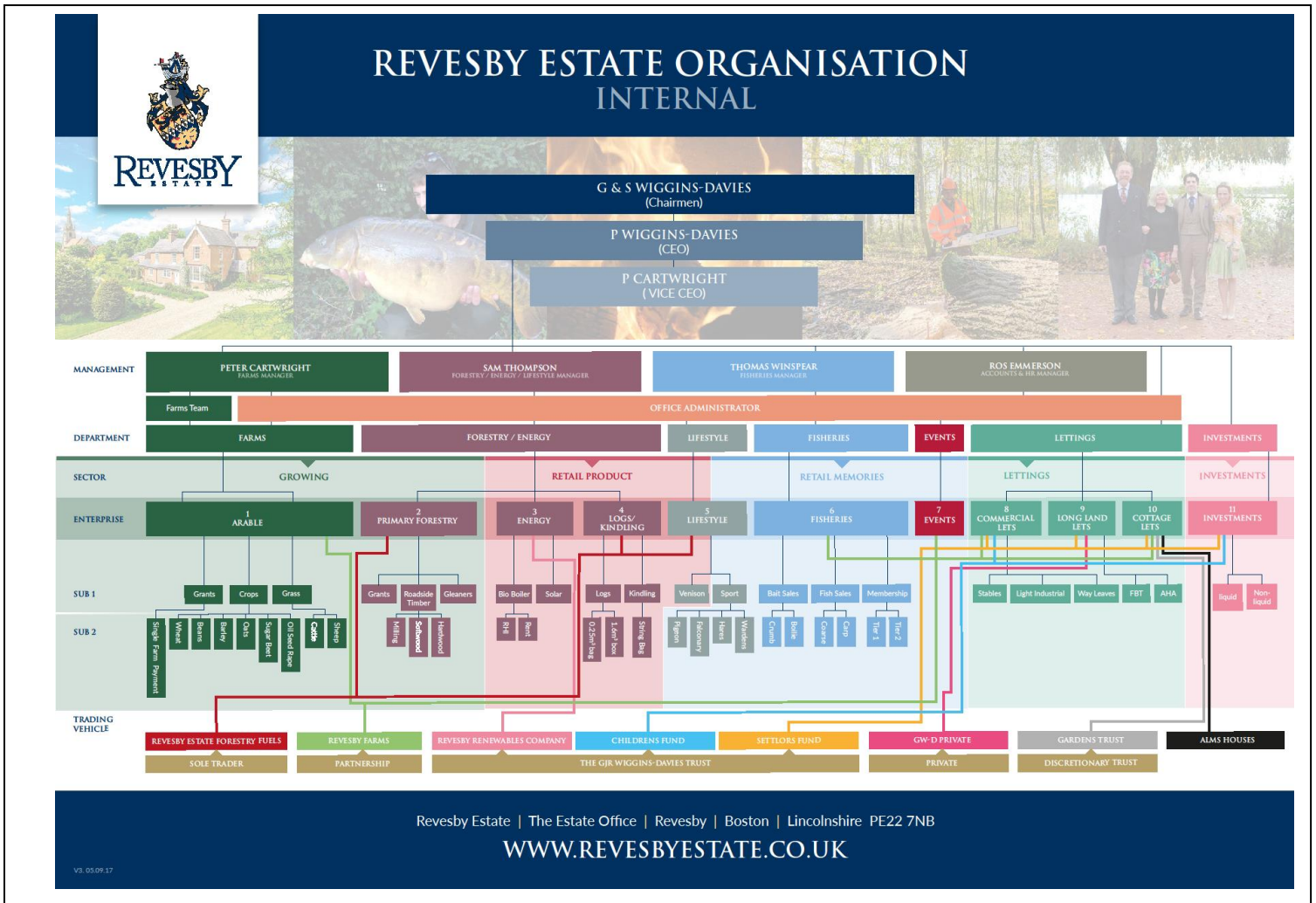


Figure 25: Revesby Estates own Organogram

The advantages of an Organogram are that it bridges strategy and operations and:

- It forms the backbone for all accounting and accountability
- Helps remove constraints
- Helps to link costs to incomes
- Visualises the links between risk, effort, return and growth potential
- Helps to highlight under-utilised assets
- Makes benchmarking within the business possible
- Predicts the type of relationship you have with your customer e.g. B to B, or B to C



Round the world I saw organograms being implemented very effectively, including on two German Estates, Panker Estate and Brodowin.

“Try and view your business by sector as this helps how you operate”
 Antonis Vezyroglou, Vezyroglou Farm

“Income streams are just as important as assets”
 Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

“Each department should have key competences”
 Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

“Nuts and bolts must be correct and understood to a department”
 Stuart Tighe, Boolah Partnerships

“Align all costs to incomes.”
 Tom Eastlake, Fair Field Orchard

3) How do we do it?

At the very start of my Nuffield Farming journey I heard Allan Wilkinson from HSBC state that the difference between the top and bottom producers is vast. This void is not because of different assets but because of how the businesses are managed; a point supported by Stuart Tighe who said quality and consistency of operation are key.

Mark Gomez put it nicely: movies cannot run with just a script, who would do the lighting or the filming?

Businesses are exactly the same: they need processes. What we do and how we do it is our biggest point of difference.

A process, put simply, is: Input + Activity = Output.

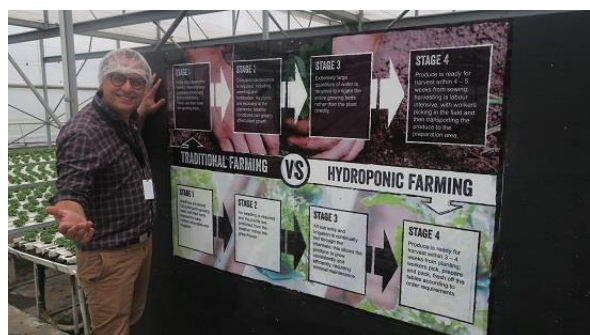


Figure 26: Jan Vydra: extremely organised production systems (Australia)



I visited many businesses which were operating under tight processes. The sectors included manufacturing, food and service.

I was most impressed how, for example, Biltmore Estate viewed every customer contact ('touch point') as part of a manufacturing assembly line and created processes to give the highest customer satisfaction. Doug Carrigan from Carrigan Farms knew how many hot-dogs each tray holds, how many bags of coal they require and the breakdown of the number of hot-dogs eaten between boys and girls.

I was very fortunate in being able to visit Michael Chilvers, an Australian Scholar, whose Nuffield report was based on processes. We discussed the advantages of processes including:

- Help remove repetitive bottlenecks
- Minimise resources (finance/labour/machinery)
- Stop you making the same mistakes over again
- Help consistently deliver what the customer wants
- Help increase job satisfaction and security
- Great for scaling
- Create performance indicators
- Unify
- Highlight areas for improvement
- Share management
- Better succession e.g. if someone falls ill
- Effective training of new staff
- Reduce risk

It is the what/how/when/where/who - its creation results in one more 'W' - the why!

And in the other corner - I also visited businesses which were quite anti-process and felt that their particular operation would not suit processes, usually due to too many variables.

One such example was Walter Bell, a Philadelphian homicide detective. After a 'bump' (a body discovery) he believed that training and processes are a waste of time as human instinct cannot be mapped.

In truth I think those business leaders had subconsciously created their own processes, but just never viewed them as such

Unfortunately as a moth gets drawn to a light, I get drawn to documents and pieces of paper. I do see a place for process, possibly not to follow religiously but rather as a tool to appraise how you operate.

Mark Gomez's key process tips were:



Figure 27: Mortimer Freiherr von Maltzan, combine shed (Germany)



- Give each process a name
- Not more than 5 steps per process
- Not more than 10 processes per enterprise
- Do not take processes too far
- Use a picture where possible
- Create them with the people operating them
- Always be aware of the end customer
- Start with the important ones e.g. biggest impact on business
- Creation is just the start: they then need communicating, adopting and auditing and improving.

Continuous improvement is the dream; constant small improvements at zero or low cost are preferable to large lurches in different directions.

"Everything that we do in business is in effect a process."
Gunther Neumann, Remonids Austria Pty Ltd.

"Holistic processes are powerful. If a process works in one department, use it in another." Irene Wallstabe, PWC

"Must understand why this process creates that output."
Keith Wennek, Growth Drivers Consulting

"Processes can reduce noise and risk." Jan Vydra, Fresh Leaf

"Processes are critical." James Townshend, Velcourt

"Structure is key to growth." N Efthymiadis, Redestos Group

"Make sure your processes can take on more and grow."
James Townshend, Velcourt

"The more you do the more efficient you need to be with your time."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"The down side of process is bureaucracy and you may be training people to no longer think and improve situations."
Irene Wallstabe, PWC



“Scale and diversity drive the need for processes.”
Mortimer Freiherr von Maltzahn, Daberkower Landhof

“Process understanding enables me to be a ‘top 10%’ producer.”
Mortimer Freiherr von Maltzahn, Daberkower Landhof

“The role of the entrepreneur is to understand his business.”
N Efthymiadis, Redestos Group

“Analyse current state - here are the nuggets.”
Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

“Document good practice leaves managers with good ideas.”
Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

6d. How am I doing?

Understanding the relationship between objectives and performance is key.

The non-financial objectives are relatively easy to appraise; the financial ones are considerably harder. According to Don Robertson from Business Turnaround Services, the bookkeepers must be on top of their game as accounts figures need to be both accurate and timely.



Figure 28: Rüdiger Müller, Bietikow Estate, with his most important tool (Germany)

“You would not watch a sports match without an accurate score board.”
Don Robertson, Business Turnaround Services

Accounts are not simply accounts. Often tax accounts are not suitable for business performance analyses as they have been drafted with tax in mind.

Just looking at the single business in a single year is not helpful in terms of making business decisions. The key lies in comparing multiple years/businesses and looking for trends. It is only worth tracking



what really affects profit/growth and what you can actually change. What you measure and track will improve; what you do not may get worse. Having methods to track performance is vital.

“Estates are made up of profit making areas and loss making areas: understanding the global picture is key.” Carl Graf von Hardenberg

“Know your margins.” Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

“I know my exact cost per tonne.” Rüdiger Müller, Bietikow Estate

*“Always have a margin on budget, otherwise budgets are too tight.”
Patrick Duffeler, Williamsburg Winery*

Benchmarking

I met BB Goettingen, Germany’s oldest advisor on benchmarking, a system which many of the estates I visited relied heavily on. BB Goettingen only work with two-year averages of approved audited accounts. It takes approximately nine months to become compliant.

They present figures before interest and rental charges. They are able to pivot the collected data on many variables including farm size, soil type and rainfall. This then enables operators to compare their performance against exact costs or incomes in comparable businesses. Some of the farms’ managers referred to the BB Goettingen benchmarking as being like a football league table.

Don Robertson taught me that benchmarking does not have to be a financial number. You can very easily benchmark by using ratios and percentages and this makes comparison easier in a diversified business. To make the percentages more real he referred to them as pence in the pound. He claims the target is above 10% profit from turnover.

This is loosely made up as follows:

- Gross margin costs = 65%
- Gross margin = 35%
- Selling Costs = 5%
- Operational = 7%
- Other including office expenses = 13%
- Net profit = 10%

Which fitted nicely with:



"I achieve 12% profit on my sales - aim for 10% as minimum."

William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

"5-10% profit on turnover is good". N Efthymiadis, Redestos group

"Our target internal rate of return is 9%."

Gunther Newmann, Remonmids Australia Pty Ltd

"Try and grow sales at 3% a year and costs only at 2%."

William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

Other useful ratios included the relationships between profit and turnover and profit and asset value. For Williamsburg Winery the most important ratios were debt service coverage, gearing and liquidity.

I was stunned to see 15 years of data, all compiled in the same format at Panker Estate. This data was used to demonstrate trends such as increases in yields.

"Great businesses have predictability."

Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridi Winery

"Trends and budget hitting give assurance to the bank."

Antonis Vezyroglou, Vezyroglou Farm

"Look at trends more than specific data."

Antonis Vezyroglou, Vezyroglou Farm

*"Twice a year we look at market competition, market share,
SWOT and variance."*

N Efthymiadis, Redestos group

*"Our financial summary is a maximum of 10 pages
and put on an OHP, then print off."*

N Efthymiadis, Redestos group



“Get your accounts audited then you really know.”

William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

“Only manage by results, not future budgets.”

Mortimer Freiherr von Maltzan, Daberkower Landhof



7. Introducing growth

7a. What is growth?

Now that we know what we want (objectives) and have the foundation, we can start to look at the exciting world of growth.

Defining growth has not been easy and my definition has been evolving. I believe growth is the increase in liquid and/or fixed assets from either current or new operations: liquid assets being cash in the bank, fixed being land or property etc.

Most estates have a high fixed asset value, which has been growing due to rising land prices. Unfortunately, the *return* from land, the liquid assets, has not been rising so rapidly. As the saying goes ‘*you cannot bank increases in fixed asset values*’. As a result, most estates are targeting liquid growth in the form of cash. But this is not always the case as Titan Farms wished they had concentrated on building the balance sheet more.



Figure 29: Mortimer Freiherr von Maltzahn, Daberkower Landhof with his estate map (Germany)

“Make that top line higher, lower line lower.”

Mark Hefner, N2Growth

“How can I raise income without raising costs?”

Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

7b. Growing pains

From the outset I wanted to investigate the idea of ‘pain’, as it is something that I have experienced. A few businesses such as Doddington Hall and Gardens were fortunate enough to have experienced little or no pain in their business, whereas the vast majority made reference to painful times. Often the pain was at the very start.

7b.i. Pace, space and time

Francis Seriau highlighted the importance of preparing yourself before you start on the growth road. He said you need to:

“Control the pace of your current job, have the mental space, have the available time”.



If you are the leader of a very small team, these points can be very difficult challenges to overcome. For some, such as Williamsburg Winery, they were made even harder as the owner was also starting a family at the same time. Life is like a milking-stool made up of three legs: family, work and self; if one leg is short you may fall. Others, such as Carrigan Farms, managed to combine the family with the work and thus create a two-legged stool!

7b.ii. Debt

By far and away the biggest pain came from debt and later in this report I will cover debt in more detail.

7b.iii. Reputation

I quickly learnt that failure does not have the negative stigma attached to it I thought it did. As Mr Efyymiadis said: *“you cannot always be right; you will make mistakes”*. Three quarters of the businesses I visited made reference to failed projects; more often than not to multiple failed projects. These failed projects ranged from low-investment Christmas markets to high-investment fish farming. One of my favourite quotes was from Antonis Vezyroglou, who said *“the operation was successful but the patient died”*.



Figure 30: One of Stuart Tighe’s farmyards (Australia)

Reputation stress was not only associated with failure but also success. Mr Stuart Tighe, who has a successfully expanding arable unit of some 30,000 hectares, spoke of how he wished to do more to help the local community and fight the idea that his growth is destroying the family farm.

7b.iv. Project understanding

Project understanding was not as much of a stress driver as I had initially anticipated. In fact for many it was the most exciting part of the project.

“Follow your instincts and be prepared for growth pain.” Cam McKellar

“Pain should be short and snappy.” Antonis Vezyroglou, Vezyroglou Farm

“Growth should ultimately be exciting and not painful.” James Townsend

“Between big projects it is key to let the dust settle”
Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate



8. “Riding the wave or eating someone else’s lunch” growth discovery

8a. Introduction

I like the quote “*riding the wave or eating someone else’s lunch*” as it perfectly pictures two of three ways in which a business can grow. It demonstrates just how competitive the business world is. The third way to grow was highlighted to me by Titan Farms. They had saved big costs and increased sales by reducing wastage. For them this meant having computers that weigh each individual peach so that they are only ever packing the right amount and not being too generous.

8b. Golden thread

Before my Nuffield Farming study tour I believed that inspiration for growth was externally driven, with discovery of growth routes coming from glossy magazines and other business, possibly because recently so many estates have been drawn by subsidy-driven projects such as solar, wind and biomass. To a point this is true; however, the most successful businesses I visited had a “golden thread” and a very strong foundation. A “golden thread” is a sense of identity or purpose.

It did not matter if the business I was visiting was an 800 year old German estate or an American peach grower, the business had a sense of identity in what they were providing or creating. For some this was very much service-led, like for Von Ruffin and his events or produce-led, like Rawl Farms with their salads and vegetables.

This “golden thread” enabled them to concentrate their efforts in a narrower direction, allowing them to be better at running their businesses. This” golden thread” enabled the safest type of growth, organic growth, in which the doors of opportunity appeared more naturally.

In Greece I learnt from Antonis Vezyroglou just how complicated what I was trying to do with my business is. He quickly summarised my business as growing (crops, forestry), retail product (logs) retail memories (fishing, events), and retail service (lettings and biomass). Thus my business is combining service and produce, business to business, and business to customer relationships, each one requiring a different approach. It is possible to cover them all; however it is a dilution of energy, especially for a small team.

“*You need an identity.*” Mr N Efthymiadis, Redestos Group

The growth I witnessed fell loosely into four categories:

8c. Scale/replication

If you are running a successful business and there is the potential to scale or replicate, this has to be the more obvious lower risk option. This option was the chosen road for most businesses I visited. In Australia I witnessed this being done very effectively by David Brownhill and Stuart Tighe, and their cereal farms had expanded significantly.



A word of warning: scale is critical and is constantly changing.

Producers who are selling directly to supermarkets, products such as salads for example, are witnessing the drive for fewer but larger suppliers. For growers like Titan Farms this means they have to grow to guarantee their market share is big enough for the supermarkets.

Producers selling a commodity with a low point of difference on a global market, for example wheat, have a lot of competition resulting in the driving down of prices. This results in farms growing in size to achieve better economies of scale. I have witnessed this at home. The estate tenancy map has reduced in tenant numbers dramatically over the last fifty years with the average holding size doubling.

Not to grow in a commodity market is to stand still and ultimately go backwards. That said it is important to know where economies of scale are.

“Supermarkets have low margins so need volume. That’s why they only want to deal with a few big players.” William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

“Margins increase with sales.” Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

“Scaling will give you a better return.” Mark Hefner, N2Growth

“Scale gives you potential to go further.” Mark Hefner, N2Growth

“Buy land even if it only breaks even with interest, as it appreciates in value, and brings economy of scale.” Chalmers & Lori Anne Carr, Titan Farms

“Land prices could drop.” Rüdiger Müller, Bietikow Estate

“Be big and early.” Ashley Rawl, Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc.

“Must take opportunities. We got approached by a supermarket in order to produce some PL products - we said no. Now we are begging to get in.”
Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridi Winery



8d. Cross-selling and vertical integration

It is certainly true some businesses lend themselves to vertical integration and even cross-selling better than others. A cereal farm, for example, is limited compared to a salad producer. I witnessed some very impressive examples.

Rawl Farms very successfully went both down and up the supply chain. They plant, harvest, process, pack and deliver their salad crops. Where possible they have tried to remove third party involvement and achieve maximum value. This approach has resulted in Rawl growing by 18% in the last two years; although for them growth targets are not percentages but amounts in dollars.

Cross-selling was more suited to the service industry. I loved the example from Hans-Caspar Graf zu Rantzau from Pronstorf Estate. He started selling Christmas trees, which led to the creation of a Christmas market, which led to the running of more events, which led to him doing weddings which led to him converting his farm buildings into a hotel.



Figure 31: Me quality inspecting production at Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc (USA)

“Controlling the supply chain helps guarantee quality.”

Barb Madden, Smithfield Cattle Co

“Storing grain for other people has helped us take on more land.”

Carl Graf Von Scheel-Plessen, Sierhagen Estate

“Once people are on site you have to keep them there.”

William Cecil, Biltmore Estate

“The key is to add value without cost. For example, I found out what the millers wanted, I searched the world for the best, found it in Italy, improved it and now sell the seed to farmers.” N Efthymiadis, Redestos Group

“Sometimes they must be shown what they need.”

Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms



8d. Subsidy driven

I was surprised to see subsidy driven diversification projects only in Europe. As in the UK, Germany had a high uptake on biomass, solar and anaerobic digestion.



Figure 32: Enno Freiherr Von Ruffin’s woodchip bunker for his subsidy-driven heating system. I was most impressed by the bunker’s simplicity and low installation cost (Germany)

“Be careful with anything that relies on subsidies”
Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, Prontstorf Estate

“Big disadvantage to subsidy projects is the core strength has a finite life and is often not scalable.”
Gunther Neumann, Remonids Austria Pty Ltd

8e. Diversification

As I mentioned in my introduction the most diversified businesses were the estates. Many of the estates in Germany have chosen to move into services i.e. selling memories rather than products.

Estates are in a strong position to deliver such a service, as they often have a local awareness and attractive location that people enjoy visiting, and have a nostalgia or charm. This nostalgia or charm forms Biltmore Estate’s golden thread; they refer to it as the Biltmore Oasis. Moreover, experiences



Figure 33: Beautiful view: Doug Carrigan’s swimming quarry (USA)



and memories are becoming more valued than ever in our hectic screen-filled worlds.

Events have many advantages:

- Easy initially to partner
- Can be low investment
- Very scalable
- Opens new potential doors
- Great way to use undersized assets. E.g. Enno Freiherr Von Ruffin's horse stable is now a restaurant

The most important factor is the customer base and the successful businesses, like Biltmore and Von Ruffins, also had successful locations.

"Customers drive the growth you must know your customers, within one hour." Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"Customers have choices: know what they are."
Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

"Your tenants have to be behind it." Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate

"Saturday and Sunday are our money days" Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"Business to customer relationships can be very demanding."
Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting

"Some people are crazy and can never be pleased."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"The trick is to make people feel like a king for a day. Make them look good."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"Sell them fun and something they do not have."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"When speaking to customers try and hear it as they would."
Mark Gomez, Allegro Consulting



“Must earn the trust of our customers - that is key.”
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

“Cannot give what we do not have – under-promise and over-deliver.”
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

“You will never make money by saying no. Be flexible and make everything possible. For example, a couple wanted a 3-tonne boulder moving. I said, ‘Yes, sure, it will cost \$10K.’ They said ‘no’, but they had the option. Every table and chair has legs so we can walk them here and walk them there.”
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms.



9. Does this fit me OK? Evaluation

Pin-pointing how to evaluate potential projects was not as objective as I had hoped. Many leaders had subjective feelings and a confidence to execute. What I did recognise was two worlds exist inside and outside the business, both having a direct influence on the success of a growth project. By 'inside', I am referring to an existing resource, for example, skills or machinery; 'outside' refers to the wider world where opportunity lies.

9a. Risk

The buzz word when evaluating a project is risk. We have already heard that many operations fail. One of the major limitations of an estate is we cannot completely fail and then start again. Nothing is without risk and where possible it needs managing.

The only way to really manage risk is to try and understand the link between risk severity, risk likelihood, capital required and time before return is likely.

As stated above the lowest risk strategy is to do more or improve what you are already doing.

Text books teach that risk can be grouped as follows:

- Employee
- Customers
- Money
- Environment

And influenced by a STEEPLED model:

- Social
- Technological
- Economic
- Environmental
- Political
- Legislative
- Ethical
- Demographics

The glory of a Nuffield Farming Scholarships is that it's not an internet search; it is real life and these were the main risks I heard about:

(please see over page)



"Political Change." Anon.
"Weather." David Brownhill
"Customer demand." William Cecil, Biltmore Estate
"Reputation." Shirley Plantation
"3D's: death, divorce and debt." Mathew Durak, Stahmann Farms
"Interest Rates." Anonymous German estate
"By growing you may be changing job descriptions - your people may no longer be able to do the job, or want to."
Gunther Neumann, Remonids Australia Pty Ltd
"Disruption to your core business." Davis Birch, Doddington Hall and Gardens

As I expected, the Greek financial crisis had a big impact on most businesses there. In 2010 Federico Lazaridis, from Château Nico Lazaridis Winery, had a 42% drop in turnover. For 3 years now Nico Lazaridis Winery has succeeded not only in recuperating the lost turnover but to record a significant growth as well.

The shrewd business had evaluated their core risks and created strategies e.g.

"To minimise the effect of a food scare we have many sub brands."
Ashley Rawl, Walter P. Rawl and Sons, Inc.
"As cherries have such a short shelf-life, I sell them before harvest."
Thomas Eastlake

BUT

"Mainstream ideas or small risks result in small reward."
Irene Wallstabe, PWC

Being an optimist I would like to conclude with some positive encouragement.

"Just do it!" Enno Freiherr Von Ruffin, Gut Basthorst
"If you need to do it, just do. Sometimes you have no choice, but do it for the money not because you can." Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms
"Nothing happens until an idea is created and implemented."
Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms



9b. Evaluation criteria

I have tried to list the key recurring themes:

- Potential to scale? (If it does take off, then can it really be exploited?)
- Exit strategy? (If things go wrong, a way of getting out)
- Non-constraint? (Does not negatively impact on current operations)
- Sustainable? (At least long enough to return investment)
- Fit? (With foundational documents)
- How we compare to competition? (Especially market share)
- How we appeal to customers, and how many?
- Do I understand it?
- Cash flow positive, even after tax and capital repayment?
- Can I partner with other people to share risk/management?
- Does it work within the tax system?
- Do I have the right people?
- Will I enjoy it?
- What are my limiting factors? (Often they were finance, knowledge, time and people)
- What are my success factors? Am I playing to my strengths?
- What is my competitive advantage?
- Is my location correct?
- Length of return?
- Am I at the mercy of someone else?
- Am I doing this because of demand or just because I can?

I will look at location and return length in more detail as they are both very important.

9b.i. Location

Location was a critical success factor for many of the businesses I visited. For example, South Carolina had quality soils, good rainfall and close access to markets which helped Rawl Farms and Titan Farms. By being within 6 hours drive of a staggering 200 million people – two thirds of the USA population – Biltmore Estate was ideally located. Another prime location was Enno Freiherr Von Ruffin, who is located not only in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but between two of its wealthiest cities.

9b.ii. Return length

I have split “length of time for return” as opinions varied greatly. Return is a difficult calculation partly because return can be both liquid and capital. For example, when converting a barn to a house, the increased capital value may immediately be worth more than the invested capital. However, it may take 15-20 years before the annual profits pay off the initial invested capital.



Figure 34: Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, converted wedding venue (Germany)



Figure 35: Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, converted hotel (Germany)

The acceptable rate of return varied greatly by country and sector, and business to business.

It was so interesting to see how Greece’s struggling economy had impacted acceptable returns.

The Australian and American farming sectors were broadly similar:

“Farm land must return 4% of asset value.” Cam McKellar
“Lender gets approximately 4% of land value.”
Stuart Tighe, Boolah Partnerships

Although businesses in more aggressive sectors had higher aspirations.

“Do not go beyond 10 years.” Barb Madden, Smithfield Cattle Co
“Max 10 years.” Chalmers & Lori Anne Carr, Titan Farms,
“Less than 14 years not interested.” Thomas Eastlake, Fair Field Orchard

European business also had mixed ideas on return

“14-17 years is OK.” Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate
“5 years short; 10-15 medium; 15-20 long; over 20 too long.”
Albrecht Freiherr Knigge jun, Freiherr Knigge GmbH

There is clearly no one hat that fits all, so many factors play a role.

In conclusion, for a European estate enterprise return length I believe:

- 0-5 years is very short (possible service-led events)
- 6-10 years is short



- 11-20 years is medium
- 21 years+ is long

It has to be stressed that not all projects require a large capital outlay. Carrigan Farms pumpkin rides and quarry swims were very low investment with very high returns.

"Hotel not 5%, but important, so did it."

Heinrich Von Der Decken, Panker Estate

"Two fast nickels better than one slow dime." Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

9c. Someone Is going to have to pay: funding

9c.i. Introduction

I came across very few examples where growth did not require initial capital outlay. Businesses did not have "war chests" they could just dip into. The funding came from outside sources. In Europe, this was usually just bank funded, whereas in America and Australia, it was bank and investor funded. Lack of investment at the start had a negative effect on many of the businesses I visited. I was told time and time again: invest properly at the start; do not try and do it on the cheap.

"You have to invest in growth." Mark Hefner, N2Growth

"Do it properly or not at all." Chalmers & Lori Anne Carr, Titan Farms,

"Do not invest too much in the back end." Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"Always a dual use." Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

"Only spend on things that will make you money."

Doug Carrigan, Carrigan Farms

9c.ii. Partnering

Stuart Tighe has successfully used seven outside investors to build his very large farming operations. He likes to have few, but big investors as this makes his life considerably easier, especially when it comes to the monthly reporting. The investors purchase the land, while Stuart provides the machinery. The agreements are complicated and vary greatly. They can either be a flat rental or a profit share. For example, 80% returns to active farmer, 20% returns to landlord. It can take a long time to gain the confidence of large investors - it took him ten years.

In Germany, I heard several examples of successful partnering; sometimes for capital, sometimes for management expertise. The need for structure to remove the human element was highlighted many times.



9c.iii. Attitude to debt

Debt attitude was by far the biggest point of difference between the countries and types of businesses I visited. At the start of my journey in Germany, Philip Freiherr von Oldershausen made the very valid point that growth can be planned and staggered thus removing the need for debt.

I witnessed this theory in reverse in Australia and America with some of the fastest growing businesses having the most debt. Waiting was a luxury some businesses could not afford because they needed market share.

With his background in banking Thomas Eastlake helped guide me down the road of debt.

When you borrow money, there are three main considerations:



Figure 36: Thomas Eastlake
cherry processing plant (Australia)

9c.iii.1. Gearing percentage

Gearing is the relationship between debt and asset value expressed as a percentage. It is always dangerous to generalise, but loosely speaking the gearing approach was:

German Estates = 30% is high

Greek and Australian farms:

- 20% = having a go
- 30-40% = debt sweet spot
- 40-50% = medium
- 50%+ = high

I heard in Australia: if you are not gearing to 20% you are not even having a go - you have to sweat your assets. I spoke to one Australian farmer with gearing of 80%.

But is gearing an important ratio?

It is certainly important to the banks as it provides a safety blanket. That said, banks were clearly willing to lend at far higher levels where they had confidence in the business. Furthermore, the ratio is based on a valuation which is fluid and subjective. Finally, and possibly most importantly, gearing does not make any reference to debt affordability. However, gearing percentages make reference to potential funds for growth. As a result I think it is an important ratio.

I learnt that having a single maximum gearing percentage may not be correct. Gearing should be based on several factors including:



- life span
- speed of return
- exit strategy
- size of return from investment

I am going to stick my neck out - I feel that rural estates should be gearing to a maximum of 35%:

- 15% land
- 10% property or some other asset with an obvious exit strategy
- 10% into faster returning projects.

I have pitched the gearing percentage at less than the Australians and Greeks, as often their farms had an exit strategy that they were prepared to use. This is not the case for many estates. At the start of this report I mentioned the importance of defining the core and, as such, gearing can clearly not trespass into this security.

"If you do not gear you grow slowly." Anon.

9.iii.2. The interest

Being in my mid-thirties, I have only ever experienced low interest rates. However, I am aware of the dizzy heights they rose to in the 1980s. We are constantly told interest can but go up, so should we be fixing? Thomas Eastlake made the point that based on averages, if you go for a flexible rate over a long enough time period it should work out less. However, he also went on to say, if you have high gearing and lower ability to service (so tighter margins) a fixed rate will give you more security. But if you do fix, you will be limited to fixed capital repayments. Fixed interest rates are a risk protection strategy, not a way of getting lower interest. He also recommended ring fencing the interest costs, as if they are not paid you will sink.

9.c.iii.3. The principal (amount owing)

If a variable rate is taken with flexible repayments, when and how much to repay becomes a relevant factor. Australia taught me an important lesson and gave me another mini lightbulb moment, and this was the effect of inflation on static or appreciating asset classes - for example land:

Worked example (assumption land value stays static, 2% inflation, no capital paid off)

- Purchase 1 acre for £10,000.
- In ten years' time through inflation alone your acre is worth £12,000
- But your debt to the bank is only £10,000
- If your trading profits covered the interest, after 10 years you have reduced the value of your loan by 20%

I witnessed this theory often in Australia, many were banking on this as paying for their retirement.

"Choose a bank manager, not a bank". Otto Freiherr Grote, Juehnde Estate



10. Brand

In today's world brands are everywhere, and we are all influenced by them. Many of the businesses I visited placed great importance on creating a strong brand. Conversely, some estates preferred a lower profile and thus tried very hard not to create a brand at all.

One of the best utilisers of brand was Carl Graf von Hardenberg



Figure 37: Carl Graf von Hardenberg carpet (Germany)



Figure 38: Carl Graf von Hardenberg golf island (Germany)
<http://www.gchardenberg.de/>



Figure 39: Carl Graf von Hardenberg vehicles (Germany)

"They [brands] can open many doors." Antonis Vezyroglou, Vezyroglou Farm

"Brands must stand for something: your purpose, position and personality, so your market presence can be clearly felt." Simon Cole, Thrive Thinking

"We had to rebrand - we got it wrong first time." Sam Lord, Eliris Estate

"Use pictures to help represent your brand."

Gunther Neumann, Remonids Australia Pty Ltd

"Always think: who is the audience?"

Gunther Neumann, Remonids Australia Pty Ltd

"You must invest in your brand." N Efthymiadis, Redestos Group

The estate building blocks should define the brand. Brands can be expensive to build, but in my mind, worth the investment, especially if you are selling directly to the general public.



11. Conclusions

1. Estates are more than just businesses. They have 6 very distinct building blocks:
 - Custodianship
 - Visual and historic objectives
 - Social objectives
 - Environmental objectives
 - Complicated family involvement
 - Diversified income streams.
2. These building blocks go far beyond the normal expectations of an ordinary business. If they are going to be achieved it is key the business is built around clear objectives. These can be loosely grouped into 4 categories:
 - Succession
 - Keeping the family together
 - Non-financial objectives
 - Financial objectives
3. Once the business has direction through defined objectives, one can build a strong foundation. The foundation of a business is no longer unique to estates. A strong foundation requires:
 - Leadership
 - Culture
 - Employees
 - Routine functions routinely
 - A hunger to learn from others
 - An accurate understanding of assets and operations
 - A clear understanding of financial and non-financial performance
4. Many estates wish to grow, often in liquid assets and not capital asset terms. This growth can bring both pain and additional risk. By having a clear “golden thread” and evaluation criteria, risks can be reduced. Often growth requires funding which is financed through debt. A suitable gearing level is 35%, comprising:
 - 15% land purchase
 - 10% cottages or assets with an easy exit strategy
 - 10% faster returning profits.
5. Furthermore, from these investments I believe as a guide return lengths are:
 - 0-5 years is very short (possibly service led, like events)
 - 6-10 years is short
 - 11-20 years is medium
 - 21+ years is long

continued on next page



6. The most common ways in which the businesses I visited were growing were through:
 - Scale/replication
 - Cross selling and vertical integration
 - Being subsidy driven
 - Diversification
7. Family-owned rural estates have to evolve and move with the times. There is no escaping that at the end of the day they are businesses and not charities.



12. Recommendations

12a. Build the strong foundation

12a.i. Leadership

Learn how to improve my leadership style. What tools can help?

12a.ii. Culture

Changing culture is extremely difficult and most attempts fail. Change management refers to the shift from how things are done now to how you wish them to be done. Look at what can be changed. What are realistic change objectives?

12a.iii. Employees

Try to learn how the perfect team be created and then kept motivated and effective.

12b. Growth

12b.i. Business plans

Create a bespoke business plan structure that is suited to rural estates. How many years would it cover? What would its key sections be?

12b.ii. Off-estate investment

Look not only at estate investments. Look at off-estate investments. Look at whether a mix of the two is optimal.

12b.iii. Execution of projects

Look at what tools and techniques can be used to turn strategy into reality?



13. After my study tour

So my studies are complete, I am back home, my sun tan has faded and fires have been put out, what now?

Now is the time to implement the wealth of knowledge that I have learnt.

As a family we have already created our strategy documents that intend to fulfil the unique estate building blocks. Surprisingly, we all really enjoyed doing it. We all have a copy; they are signed and dated.

I am currently working on creating that strong foundation.

I have taken on two business mentors to aid my development as a leader. As my report recommends, I meet them on a monthly basis.

To help nature and improve the business culture, I am pulling as few levers as possible. We now have an all-team monthly meeting in which I am bringing in further external trainers and their knowledge. As a team we are identifying and correcting where necessary the estate's culture. The culture is underpinned by our, hot off the press, Estate Values Statement (see Appendix).

We have created a board structure and are aiming to meet quarterly. Our exact agendas are not yet agreed but progress is being made.

We are working on the "everything just clicks" feeling. We, or rather I, am creating processes for critical parts of the business. The other managers are yet to see the need for processes. I am convinced myself; however I wish to convince them rather than just demand from them. This has resulted in a slow adoption of processes. So not yet "just clicking", more of a little turn and then a click!

I am yet truly to define our "golden thread", although it certainly consists of arable farming and servicing the needs of the local area.

We have worked hard and invested heavily into our brand. I am looking forward to the day I am off the estate and hear people talking (in a good way!) about the estate.

I aim to begin the next growth phase within 12 months, once the foundation is exactly as I want it.

Peter Wiggins-Davies



14. Thanks and Acknowledgements

My thanks split into three little groups, (by now you must have learnt I like structure and pigeon holes).

The Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust

Absent friends: William Morris, 1st Viscount Nuffield. You have created a legacy which is in rude health. It has had such an effect on both me and the estate.

The “still living” at NFST also deserve special thanks. In particular Mike Vacher, who, with his military management style managed to line us up and make this happen.

My mentor, Matt Swain. Matt has not only been there to support my project more importantly he has become a close friend and has supported me personally.

The visited

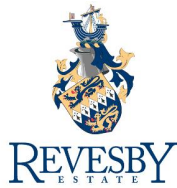
There are too many to mention and everyone I met was most welcoming and kind. I cannot thank them all enough for their time, knowledge and genuine hospitality.

The people who picked up the pieces and kept things going in my absence

My wife, daughter, mother and father - thank you for allowing me this opportunity, and supporting me. Grandma, I am sorry I have not visited as much as I would have liked to, now my Nuffield Farming report is handed in, you will be seeing a lot more of me again. The estate - thank you team. You proved I am redundant!



Appendix 1 Revesby Estate Values Statement



Values Statement

Revesby Estate is very proud of its heritage, diversity and ability to achieve the highest of standards. The Estate particularly prides itself on its visual appearance.

The underlying objective of the board is:

“To be proud to show any one any area of our operations at any time.”

All members of the team, suppliers, and customers feel they are respected and the part of something special. Every task is performed in a sustainable, legal thought out thorough manner.

The working environment is both productive and enjoyable.

We are, and expect every one we come in contact with, to be:

Personable (approachable/Friendly/Courteous/Helpful)
Accountable (when something is agreed, it gets done)
Organised and Methodical (not shooting from the hip)
Innovative/ Dynamic (thinking how can this be improved)
Enthusiastic/Passionate/ Self Motivated/ (Rough with the smooth)
Presentable (both personal and representing the industry)
Honest (To the letter I have done, have been done)

Costs and incomes are closely monitored and accurately reported.

We align ourselves with the best at every opportunity, we are market leaders.

All departments come together to make the whole, Revesby Estate.

All departments actively seek to help each other.

Decisions are made in a consistent manner.

Revesby Estate has two core missions. Not only to remain whole, but sympathetically to increase both its income streams and asset base. Secondly to save and build upon its heritage, identity, character, community and environment.